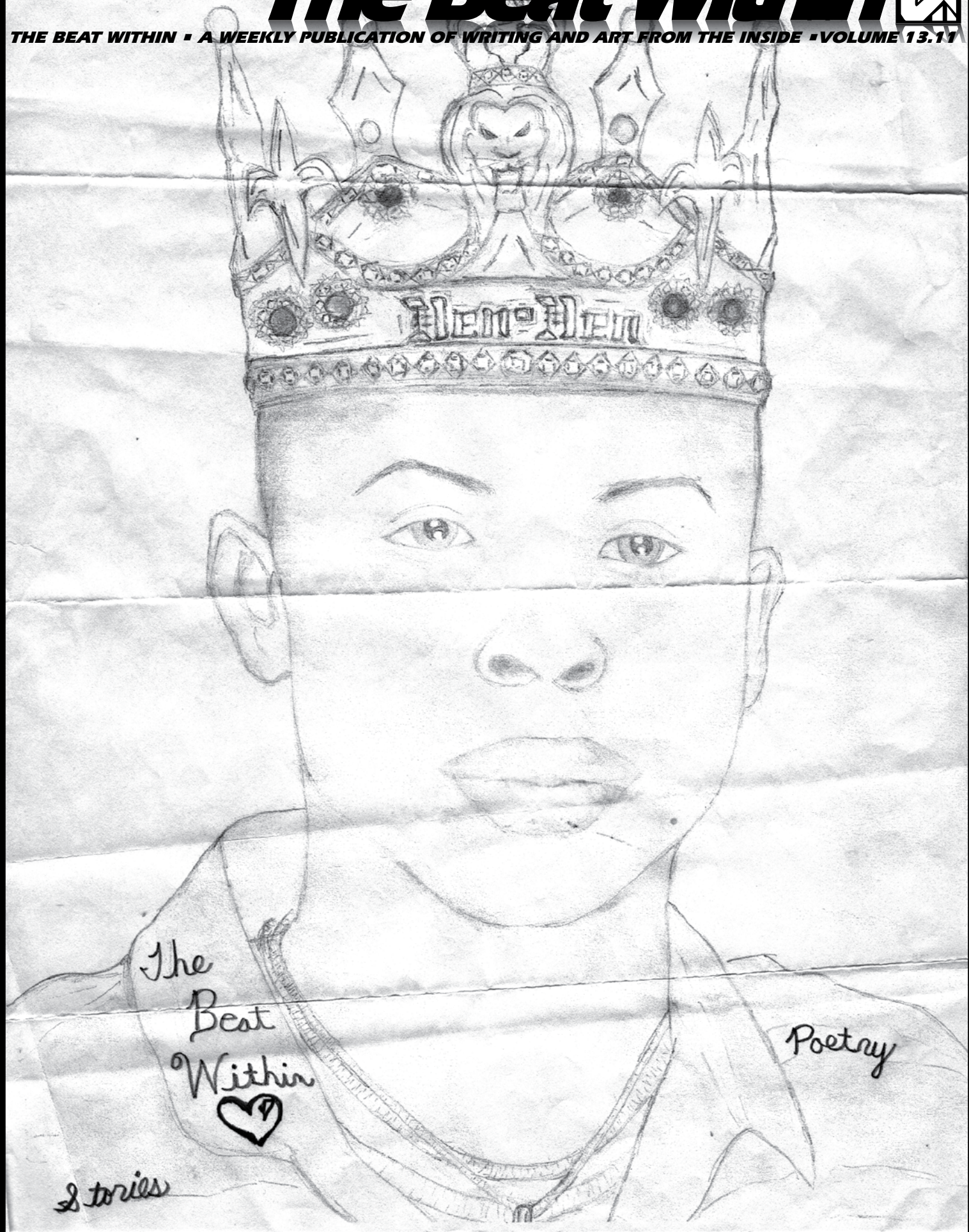


The Beat Within



THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.11



Hello all,

A week ago, last Tuesday night, was yet another benchmark moment in Beat history. As a few of you know, over the last year independent filmmakers Kevin Gordon and Nadia Sussman have been filming every move of The Beat Within for their documentary. They have been particularly interested in Perry Jones and Will Roy's story. Damn, who wouldn't be, given who both these young men were, once upon a time, young detainees in juvenile hall, to who they are today, particularly, Perry.

Well last Tuesday night Kevin, Nadia, two cameramen and a sound engineer (with the help of The Beat Within, City Youth Now, juvenile hall (San Francisco's Chief Probation Officer, Bill Sifferman, Director of juvenile hall, Dennis Doyle and Asst. Director, Tim Diestal) and the Superior Court Judge, Donna Hitchens) gained access to film our workshops in action.

This by the way was not the first time The Beat workshops have been filmed in juvenile hall. Back in 1998 Richard Saiz and the late Jamie Gibbons filmed a wonderful 22 minute documentary about The Beat Within. And in the early 2000's, film maker Jonathan Robinson and The Beat Within gained access into SF/YGC max unit B5 to film a part of his award winning documentary Every Child is Born a Poet: The Life and Work of Piri Thomas," which was aired on PBS and showcased in film festivals around the country. Oh yeah, in 2006 KPIX channel 5 filmed The Beat Within in action in the max unit in Alameda County.

Damn, Tuesday night was special. I must say, it is so awesome to work a long side Perry. I sure miss having a co-facilitator in workshops. The chemistry was sure there, to say the least. You know Perry and I have had the opportunity to do numerous speaking engagements and workshops, from New Orleans, Los Angeles, to San Jose, to Oakland and everywhere in between but we never ever did a workshop together in San Francisco, until last night. San Francisco is special for both of us, given this is where I first met Perry when he was a very angry and lonely 14 years old (he is now 26) fighting for his life.

Well, Nadia and Kevin were able to get clearance (not an easy task) for 10 young men to participate in the workshop. Unfortunately we could not conduct the workshop on the unit, so we conducted The Beat Within workshop in the multi purpose room - we should really work on having a Beat celebration in this room. The workshop lasted two hours.

Unfortunately the biggest challenge for the filmmakers was that they could not film the faces of the young people -only chin and below, yet there was still so much to capture as the kids conversated, wrote and read - from the extreme close ups to the wide shots.

So what in detail was captured on film? Well from the get... The young men entering the room and taking their seats. Long time counselor (and Beat lover)

Mr. Morris started the program as he always does by setting his ground rules.

Then Perry and this editor did our long introductions (Beat history etc.) The first half hour, then we segued into the writing workshop as we always do, handing out pencils, paper, topics and setting the tone for the next hour.

Wow, the young men were so in tune, so into the program too - Reading the topics aloud, sharing their thoughts on each topic and then we moved into the writing. As the young men wrote, Perry and I worked the room checking in with these San Francisco superstar contributors, damn, that P Crooks is something else, as is Michael, even Nana F Holly, Bigg E, Ant, Riggo, P Jeezy, Gloss and company. These guys wrote like their lives depended on it. Every encouraging push we gave them to take their work further they responded. I swear every single one of these guys last night deserves a POW!!!

In the end 9 of the ten guys read their pieces aloud to the group too. Some even read multiple times, as their peers and us adults in awe- applauded after each read. We loved it.

To close this historical evening, Kevin and Nadia brought in tasty pizza and soda for the guys. Talk about a nice payoff. Everyone was satisfied, from the young people to us adults, a real success. All smiles.

This editor loves that we now have a film that speaks of where we, The Beat Within is at in 2008. (Thanks to our friend, the equally dedicated, Kevin and Nadia.)

What a special program we have here... Then several days later our very own and loved Perry Jones was honored at the 58th Annual City Youth Now dinner. The dinner was held at the St. Francis Hotel right in the heart of Union Square in San Francisco. This was a very special night. A sell out crowd of San Franciscans, coming out to celebrate the honorees (which included the mighty powerful John Burton) and this magnificent program run by our wonderful friend, Executive Director, Britney Heinrich. Well, we can tell you from our vantage of point, which included a number of colleagues, that Perry was awesome in his speech. He was very eloquent in accepting his award from the Master of Ceremony, former San Francisco Mayor, Willie Brown, and we know he truly touched the audience with his humble insights, praise and thanks. Congrats Perry -Well deserved! Oh, by the way, Kevin and Nadia were there to capture this evening on film.

The topics discussed in this issue prior to the writing that grace this page were "Your Thoughts On A Current Event" - Recently, an openly gay middle school student in Oxnard, California was murdered by a fellow student while at school. Peers believe the murder was because of the victim's open sexual preference. The DA is charging the shooter with murder and with a hate crime enhancement. This week we want to know from you if someone you love were openly gay or lesbian, and they were violently attacked in school 'cause of their sexuality, how would you respond? What kind of thoughts would go through your head? Is this any different from hate crimes due to a person's race? What do you think must be done so we prevent tragedies like this from ever occurring again? How do we educate our community, our schools, our peers, our families, even ourselves? Can this type of hate be stopped?

The second, and most popular topic, "Loyalty" - Who has your whole heart so deeply that you feel loyal to him/her or them (as in a group)? What history do you have together that that causes you to feel so strongly attached, so faithful to this person/people? How far do you feel you have to go to prove yourself? Does staying true require any special behavior or actions on your part? How does he/she/they encourage you to expand and enrich your life? Do you ever feel you have to do anything you don't agree with, that you don't think is right, to prove your loyalty? How does this person/people show that they're also sincerely loyal to you? Now give us your view on loyalty. Explain a time when you have been loyal or someone has been loyal to you.

The third topic, "Is My Life A Life Worth Fighting For?" - Does it really matter when it comes to your life? Does it really matter whether or not you're present in this life? For some people, it means a lot to "be there" for someone who loves them and relies on them for moral support, maybe that's a good reason to fight for your life. We all know, or will find out sooner or later, that day to day life is a constant battle between your "Self" and the ways of Life, the tough things we have no control over. Sometimes it can get so tough, a person can give up hope and say "screw it." So tell us in your own words, what is it about you that motivates you to continue striving each and every day to make it, to fight for your life. Think deeply about those who are in your corner willing to put up a fight to defend who you are or who you can become. Are their efforts really worth it? Please explain why your life is important enough to fight for?

Last but not least, "Walking Away" - When did you ever size up a situation and decide that the smartest thing you could do to handle it was to simply turn around and walk away? What did you create or avoid by leaving? How do you feel now about the fact that you left? Do you wish you'd stayed? If you could do it all over again, how would you deal with it now? Tell us your walking away story.

OK friends, lets dedicate this issue to the young men who participated in the our workshops last Tuesday night, that was captured on film! This ones for P Crook, B Luva, Rico, Mike, Ant, Bigg E, Na Na F Holly, Lil' Nite, P Jeezy and last but not least, Fed Up Gloss. Best to you young men!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

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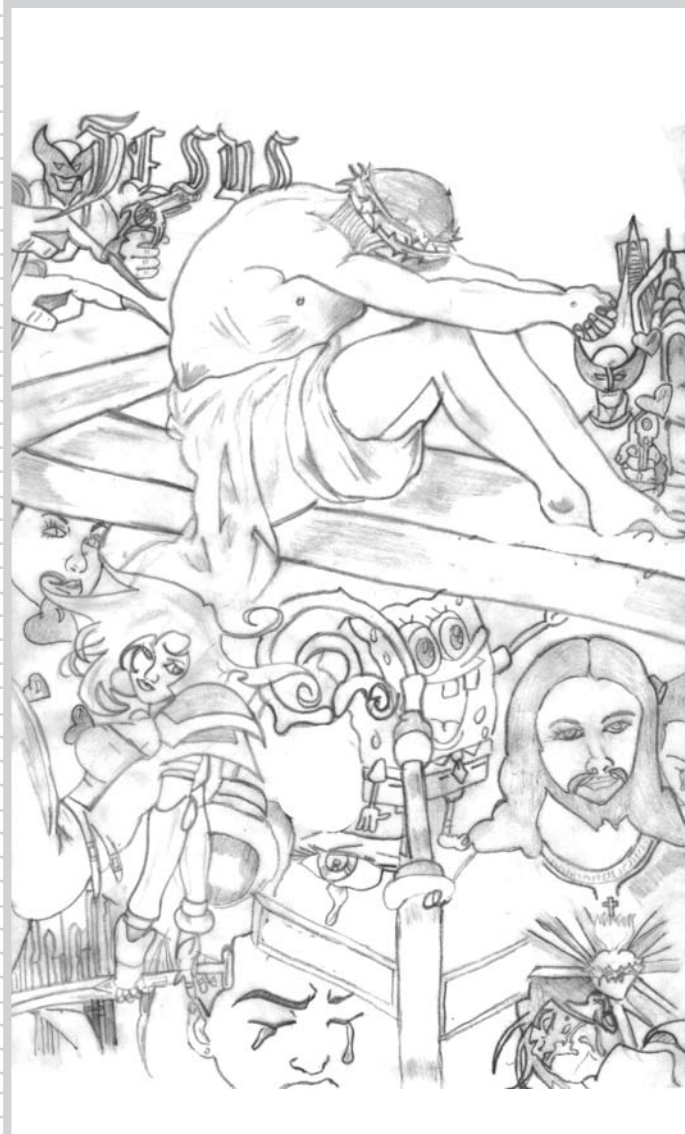
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My Life

I wanna talk about my life. My life is worth fighting for. I wanna say sorry to my moms because she been by my side for 18 years and I'm thankful for that. Without her I don't know where I would be.

I know my moms is fed up with me. I've been breaking the law since a young ninja, and I'm tired of running from the police and my PO 'cause the same results happen all the time — they catch me, bring back me back, then send me to another group home.

I desire I would've stayed at my first group home so that I could have been home legit by now. Instead, I ran from every group home. But you know, to be successful you have to take some risk in life. I'm not encouraging no one to run from a group home.

-Young Mari, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your mom may be fed up with you, but she's been waiting for you to get fed up with yourself. And, if this piece is a true reflection of your thinking, it sounds like that time has come. Yes, you do have to take some risks in life to move ahead. For you, the risk is actually doing what you need to do to get back with your mom. You owe her that much. She may be fed up with you, but she still loves you as much as she ever has. That's a gift you should treasure, and that means giving up some of what you've done in the past (risking a new way of acting) so that you can be with her, and never have to run again.

A Life Worth Fighting For

My life is worth fighting for because I'm going to go places. Like finish school, college and go around the world.

Also my sisters and brothers, I want to be around, to see them finish school and to see them also fulfill their dreams, whatever that is.

Also, I want to have some kids and be the best father to them that I never had, 'cause there are a lot of people that have kids that can't even be there for them. I want to be there and more, see them make it in life and go somewhere.

And if they repeat things that I have, then I'll talk it out with them because my parents haven't done that with me and that made me not want to talk with them. I want a bond with them so they wouldn't be afraid of me, because when I was young they made me feel that way.

-Ricardo, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate every word of this piece, Ricardo, and especially your desire to be the responsible father you never had. We believe there is no more important "job" in the world than parenting your children. Too many boys (both inside the hall and outside) think that making a baby is what makes them a father, but any male animal can make a baby. To be a father, now that is a goal worth fighting for. Don't give up on this dream!

Life

Life! People sell drugs on the corner. But you are gone be in here again. So you can go to school because on the corner is not the life for little ninjas because they gone in up in here like I did. So just go to school and get an education and not end in here.

And you are selling to your own people. Keep giving to them and they die, and it a another black person dead and they family is sad. And what up with the black on black killing? We just make people extinct. We should love each other.

-Lil' Day, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's clear that you've done some real thinking since coming here, and thinking is the beginning of change. You have not "ended up in here," because you are not ready to end up. You are slowed down on a long journey, but even this temporary stop is a lesson that can take you very far forward. Thank you for trying to teach that this is not a place for anyone. Keep thinking!

My Dad

I want to write about something that has been getting at me for a long while. That something is my Dad. When I was young my father wanted me to be a hustler. When I say "wanted" I literally mean that's what he wanted. At a young age he taught me rules and "laws" of the streets. By the time I was in early middle school I was a "duffle bag boy." This was the only life that I knew.

By the time I was a young teen my father and I had a falling out. He kicked me out of the house and told me to never come back. The last time I saw him I got in a fistfight with him and he started choking me. When my brother ran out and stopped it my dad yelled, "I would have killed you if your bro hadn't come out! Don't come back!"

I don't know what it is but I never let this get to me. I still got love for my pops deep down in my heart. I'll never forget the 13 years he stuck by my side.

I've been wanting to write my dad a letter but I haven't been able to. For some reason I don't think I could handle the pain (the worst pain I would ever feel) if he rejected me or expressed how he felt. I just hope that some day he can forgive me.

-Adrian, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You have strength that most people your age do not have. We think you should write that letter even with the possibility of rejection. We admire the fact that you have battled through the problems with your dad. We want you to know that even if he does not forgive you, you can persevere the "worst pain I would ever feel." If your strength up to this point has any bearing on the future, we know that you have a long, successful life ahead of you.

And what up with the black on black killing? We just make people extinct.

RIP Troy

Just recently, about two months ago, I found out that someone close to me had hung themselves at Birch Grove Community Park in Newark.

I had no idea because I had gotten locked up from 2005 to June 21 of 2007. I had been out for about four months in Redding, CA, because I wanted to try to be in a new area, a new city. So I was going to school and called my mamma and she told me the bad news. This person was my mamma's best friend and was family to me, 'cause I knew him my whole life.

His name is Troy and it came back, 'cause a visit I had with my mamma on Saturday made me think of it more and how much it had hurt her ...and how I am back in this hall, hurting her because I simply did not do nothing to get back in here.

I just want back to the Bay Area so I came back after I told my PO... I did not want to be there no more, so I went back and they realized they had no place so they stuck me here again.

It makes me realize how fortunate I am to still have my life. RIP Troy.

-Leo, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow. ... they say wisdom comes at a high price, and you and your mother have paid a terrible price... but if you've learned to value your life, truly deeply value it, that's pretty rare and wonderful. How does knowing this change your ideas of what you want to do with your time, your life decisions, your future?

Gay

Hey Beat, what's up? Well, the topic today caught my eye about people being gay. I know a lot of gay people. One of my friends is gay and people at school would make fun of him.

After school one day, as he was walking home, a group of kids from school jumped him because he was gay.

I felt bad because you can be whatever you want. No matter who you are remember you still are human being.

-Elissa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is an amazing piece because you respect your friend as a human being and talk about the importance of personal freedom. This topic got a lot of comments that didn't see things in such a progressive way.

RIP Frankie

Hey what's up Beat? Happy Valentine's Day to all up in here!

This is dedicated to my homeboy Frankie, he just passed away last week. Damn baby boy, you got me thinking of you, can't believe you're gone. Damn, I'm hella missing you. Everyday that goes by - you got me reminiscing of the days and how you used to hold me in your arms.

As the days go by, I feel farther from you, can't believe you left me. But like you used to tell me: "If I die before you do, I'll go to heaven and wait for you, I'll give the angels back their wings and risk the loss of everything 'cause there isn't a thing I wouldn't do to have a girl just like you." I love you baby boy and I'm thinking of you. Rest in Peace, Frankie. 4.11.91 - 2.3.08 - Gone but never forgotten.

-Sad Eyes, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is really hard to lose a loved one, especially at such a young age. But writing to them and about them is a great way to keep their memories alive. Thanks for sharing with us about Frankie - RIP.

Nothing Make Sense

Nothing make sense!

Everything is nonsense.

What is there to show for all of our hard work here on this earth?

People come and people go, but still the world never changes.

The sun comes up the sun goes down,
it hurries right back to where it started from.

The wind blows South, the wind blows North;
round and round it blows over again.

All rivers empty into the sea,
but it never spills over;

one by one the rivers return to their source.

Our eyes and our ears are never satisfied with what we see and hear.

Everything that happens has happened before, long before we were born.

No one who lived in the past is remembered anymore,
and everyone yet to be born will soon be forgotten.

-Freeman, Alameda

From The Beat: Think about it like this: Why go see a movie when you know it's gonna end in a short time? It's the experience you have while there that counts. Like all who have come and gone before us have journeyed the Earth... so must we. What matters is what you do while you're here. This is another stage of development in the University of life. Learn the lessons of each stage and advance or fail to learn your lessons and repeat those stages over and over again. And as for those in the past whom you say aren't remembered: Jesus, Buddha, Zoraster, Confucius, Mohammed, Isis, Osirus, King Tut, Malcolm X, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, blah-blah-blah the list goes on. These people lived, are physically gone but live in the hearts of billions of people today. What great things are you going to do to be remembered? Time never was, Freeman!

Loyalty

Besides the people in my family I feel that I am loyal to my boyfriend. I have known him since I was twelve and have loved him ever since we've known each other. So well that I always know what he's thinking just by looking in his eyes, and it is impossible for me to lie to him. Though we don't always see eye to eye, we never force one another to do anything out of each other's character, but most of the time we give in to each other if we can tell that it's really important to one another. He respects me to the fullest and does his best at catering to my needs.

One word that's hardly used in our relationship is "no". He shows me that he is loyal by always being there for me when I need him, and making sure that he doesn't hurt me by cheating or doing anything stupid to me.

Loyalty is one of the key things that make a relationship work. I think it defines your relationship with a person. If you are a couple or friends with benefits, being loyal to someone shows how much you care for them. It defines your love, not just in a relationship but with family and friends as well. If you are not loyal to a person then you may as well be stabbing them in the back or be two-faced which is something I plan to never be. Because when I look in my baby's greenish hazel eyes I never want to see disappointment.

-Lil' Mari, Alameda

From The Beat: You've spoken beautifully about the importance of being loyal, but do you ever feel that it's difficult to be loyal? How has being in jail affected the way you look at the relationship?

Worth Fighting For My Freedom, My Daughter

The life I'm fighting for is to become a better mother to my one-year-old-daughter.

Right now I'm apparently incarcerated, and have been doing really good. I got my GED, which is going to help me get a good job and provide support to my daughter.

I've been through a lot of drama and know what it feels like to not be successful.

Right now I'm doing every thing I can for my daughter, I think of it as the longer I'm here the closer I am getting to her. The changes I'm going to make is stop using drugs, be united with Brianna, and fight for a new life. I know I can do it.

Always keep your chin up and ever put yourself down. Brianna this is for you.

- Amber, Land Of Enchantment

From the Beat: It sounds like your on the right track Amber, continue doing what you have to so you can be with your daughter. Fight for your new life, and never give up. You're not only fighting for your life, but your fighting to have a life with your daughter. Keep your chin up and you will make it to the end.

Man in the Mirror

Through the hard times in my life I never really thought anyone would understand what I feel. But I would never look at the one who's been through what I have. The reason being I wouldn't see him a lot. He should have been the one to tell me no, and don't, and think twice, but he didn't have no one to tell him, so he would be locked up all the time. And I finally spoke to him and found out he's next door in county and he cares and feels what I feel. And he shows me much love and respect. Because he's my brother.

-Emilio, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We really like how you build up this piece of writing. The ending is quite powerful when we all find out the person is your brother. Well, now that you've found each other again, grab this opportunity to become closer to each other, to support each other in getting out of this web.

My Step Dad

Today is February 21, 2008, 7:15, and I just came back from visiting with my family.

I just found out that my step dad was murdered on February 16, 2008 at 12:30 in Oakland. He was shot 5 times in the chest.

When I walked into the visiting room, I could see my mom pouring out the tears. I asked her what had happened.

She said, "Your dad is dead".

I broke down in tears.

The whole visit we were crying and talking.

My real dad committed suicide and now my step dad has been murdered. I don't know what to do. He left a son and a daughter. My little sister is five years old.

She broke down when she heard that her real dad died. He was heavy in the game- was really respected and hated by many people. He got taken out of the game. Game over.

He's been in my life for 10 years and I love him very much. When I get out I'm going to get has name tatted on me. I already miss him. RIP Vion Mykell - 1969-2008.

Never be forgotten.

-Novoj, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is too sad and too horrible for words. Let the tears flow. Cry as long as you need to and then cry some more. We are very sorry for your family's loss.

My Opinion On A Current Event

Well, Beat... Honestly I feel that the future of the US is screwed. I think the damage done to our economy within the last eight years is irreversible without a president who implements radically unorthodox tactics.

I think the state of our country depends on whether or not an extremely unconventional thinker comes into office. I believe that Barack Obama may be this type of free-thinker, who will employ strategies to change the directions of the US economy.

Oil is becoming obsolete due to its harmful affects on the environment.

In order to overcome the financial problems we face today, Americans must be creative in discovering new avenues by which to invest- more than likely, into something that will be beneficial to the environment. So please, America, find an intellectual hippy and vote him into office.

-Jackson, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Your opinion is eloquently stated. We would enjoy continuing to hear from you, wherever you are.

My Baby Boy

My topic today is loyalty
Who am I loyal to is my
baby boy

My son, the one I have
strong feelings for
That are unexplainable;
faithful, of course

He is my man, the one I
could say my man forever
He is a part of me, my
creation

I more than love him
That's the one I'm loyal to,
for life

Until the day I die
My son is first before
anybody

Before any other ninja
I would never prefer a ninja
over my creation

You know how they say
"Females come and go"?

Well, ninjas come and go
But my man can never get

replaced, feel me?

That goes to all my single
baby mamas like me
Don't trip just 'cause baby
daddy ain't around

It ain't the end of the world
Just move on and keep yo'
head up high

Let them know you could
raise your child

Without no ninja, feel me?

All right, late, Beat. I'm out

-Monstrita, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're always impressed by how you put it down on paper, Monstrita. It's too bad that so many girls are having to raise boys without men in their lives; but you are right, you can be the mother to the child you more than love. But you can't be the mother you want to be while you're here and he's there. You not only have to put your son before any other ninja, you also have to put him ahead of you, meaning you have to sacrifice some of the things that have led you here in order never to leave his side again. We know you can do it.

My Life To Your Life

My life. Does it matter? Do I have a purpose? It's something that goes through my mind every day.

I came from a great family that has worked hard and are not criminals. Yet I find myself in a cell, sleeping in a room with a toilet. I feel that I can do the impossible. I feel that I'm not just some other baby-faced convict.

My people, my family, expect so much more and I'm willing to do whatever it takes to make them feel good.

I've been put down, ashamed, disgraced, and manipulated. But I've grown up and I see not just a corn black liquor store and homeboys who really can care less about you being incarcerated. I'm just embarrassed about how I let myself get.

My grandmother and father have worked with Cesar Chavez in the real causa. To help our Mexican Race. We deserve so much better. Every one in here does. Not just Mexicanos but everybody who's livin' hard. YOU DESERVE BETTER.

There's so much out there in the world. Places to see and great people to meet. Being told how to run your life, when you can use the restroom, being stripped searched almost everyday, and having your parents, lady, sisters, brothers, worried. It's no life to live. Broken relations, heartbreak, and pain is all you'll endure.

Trust me, who ever is reading this, go ahead and be who you really are. I guarantee you'll feel better and your parents will be proud. And if you think hurting people because you claim an affiliation is what your supposed to be proud of. Its not! It's a way bigger picture! You just need to open your eyes.

Well there's not too much time left. I am beat. To all who read my lines, I'm just telling the truth. You know what's right. You weren't born a gang member, drug addict, killer, a monster. Make the people who love you proud. Stay up. Please Beat put this in. Gone.

-Rican, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Hey Rican, you've matured so much since you first arrived in the Hall! You have a passion for helping out the community; remember to keep effort alive when you're released. There are many youth who were just like you and could use your encouragement, so continue to spread that message to others so that they can understand how to live a life with purpose.

Frustration

Ever since I been young, I been havin' these feelings, not about men, but about women. I struggle every day, all because I'm gay, but I don't get myself down. I keep my head up and act like I'm ok. I know that ain't the best thing to do, but what do I do when I have nobody to run to?

Everybody says it's a sin because of who I am, but that's not true, 'cause God will take me as I am. All I got to do is believe in him and never give up, 'cause life too short to hold a grudge. 'Cause when me and my girl walk outside, I could feel the sunshine and I know that she all mine. When I'm down, she all there to pick me up and let me know she care. When I cry, she always the one to wipe my tears. I love my babe. If you don't like it, then so be it.

-Damika, San Francisco

From The Beat: It is so hard to be "different" — especially at your age when peer pressure is everything! But "different" is not the same as sinful or bad. If God created everything, then he (she?) created you, too, so keep doing what you're doing, which is to have the courage to be who you are and to be proud of who you are. As we said in response to a different piece on the same subject, there is a great place in San Francisco where you can go and meet other young people just like you, some who are struggling with parents and friends, some who have overcome that the society would like to put on them for being different. It's called The Center, and it's at 1800 Market Street, (865-5555). When you get out of here, we hope you and your girlfriend check it out.

Momma's Loyalty

The only person who I have loyalty to is my mother and I think she has loyalty in me. Well our history is she's my mother so I have to trust her, but once I lost her trust and I had to prove it back by following her rules and doing what she say. And she pays me back by buying me what ever I want and listens to my problems. But now I have to gain her loyalty again.

At first it didn't really matter what happens in this life of mine, until I thought about the people around me and my future. It do matter if you living or not because you don't know what's ahead of you, and you don't know what you had till it's gone. I think I need to be there for my mother and my brother 'cause we already lost so many. I don't want to be on a corner all my life, so I have to start being a real man some time soon for me and my mother, so she can be proud of me.

-Jamir, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a great piece. You're very lucky to have a mother that spoils you the way she does. You're also lucky to have a good connection with your mom. It is time for you to mature and grow up and get your life straight. You don't want to be wasting your time in these kind of facilities.

The Real Oldie Poem

I remember when we used to play cowboys and cowgirls
and I let you pull my strings.
I was once your puppet, "smile now cry later" Lil' G, but it's
okay anyways.

You know you lost a good thing, I wanna be your man, but I
stay drifting on a memory. "Angel baby" I'm just confessing
a feeling.

I'd rather be with you and have your sexual healing,
but instead I'm sitting in the park thinking about me and
you, and all the memories
we had about what these arms of mine used to do.
I thought it would've been always and forever 'cause my love
for you was true.

I found love on a two way street but lost it on a lonely
highway,
you said let the side show begin but you hurt me so and
took my heart away.

Make up or break up, that's a game for fools,
I'm the one who knows that it was puppy love when we
started ditching school.

I only had eyes for you when you had me going in circles.
I realize I heard you when we listened to the oldie that goes
"cruising is made for love" and you really gotta hold on me,
now I'm 18 with a bullet and you're a big girl now
no more daddy's little girl without a bargain or a plead that
I'm gonna pay you back,
so I'm searching for my baby, have you seen her, where she
at?

'Cause I'm going to pay her back with the love in me.
I'm no longer searching 'cause I found you, you don't
remember me
but I remember you. It wasn't so long ago you broke my
heart in two,

there were tears on my pillow, pain in my heart,
it's cool though 'cause we're reunited now and no longer
apart.

I guess this dream was true, 'cause I do love you and I
caught you on the rebound
promise you, don't let no one bring you down, 'cause I'll be
around.

- Smiley, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a really interesting idea to use the oldie titles as a way to create this poem. Very creative and avant garde! Bravo. Maybe you can do another one using movie titles or book titles?

RIP Daryus Wheelock

Oakland- the city's first homicide victim of 2008- a man found shot to death Tuesday morning in West Oakland has been identified as 18 years old, Darius Wheelock aka Lil D. Police are not sure where Wheelock lived, as he has listed addresses in Oakland, Antioch, and San Leandro in the past. A passing motorist found Wheelock shot to death about 3:08 am Tuesday in the 2400 block of Wood street. Sgt. James Morris said Wednesday that Wheelock was killed where he was found. He said police have no motive for the killing and no arrests have been made.

When I heard this I didn't believe that my closest ninja got killed. When somebody told me, I was like stop playing with me, but when I seen it in the paper, I was like I didn't know what to do. So I went to my room and cried that's all I could do.

This is a ninja who I was in and out the hall with now, and now he's dead. Ain't no bringin' him back. He's gone forever. Whoever did this took him away from his ninjas, family, and friends.

Me and him was A unit top workers!... Man, it's messed up how they took his life. Only if he stayed at camp none of this would of happen. Now he's remembered as another young man killed in Oakland and just that he was the first on New Years (cops named him the year's first slaying victim).

Man, I wish I could have said some last words to you before you left. Man, I hope its coo' where you at my ninja. You know you always in my prayers ...people was sad when you left. I look at your pictures every night.

Man, I hope whoever is reading this change when they get out because I know I am, 'cause that woke me up fast. Just know bulleest don't have a name on them. I cant see that you gone you was just here laughing, whip on somebody in a-unit and now you gone damn it was just like yesterday you use to call me young ak I can hear it in my head like you use to always say you can take me off the turf but you cant take the turf out of me. my sister got two of your dreads so now im going to grow mines out and put yours on mines as memory of you. I just want you to know you aint going to be forgot bro just know that. We love you, hope you rest in peace, Oakland's finest: Daryus Wheelock, aka Lil' D.

-Young A, Alameda

From The Beat: This is such a powerful piece, and yes, we hope the readers are moved to change their lives for real, based on your hard-hitting words. But more, we are hoping you as the writers take those same steps. First thing you can do is change your name, a name is a symbol of who we want people to see us as, right? And you named yourself after a weapon, Ak, which we cut, because that is destroying our town, our fathers, our children. Give yourself a name that represents your idea of power and strength! And then grow into it.

Another Day, Another Down

Another day, another king that went down, lost to the streets that I and every body else say they can't stand to be away from...

But they go do the most stupid things to get them taken them away from every thing they say they care about. And they not only hurtin' they family, but the victim's family that goes through a lot of grief. This is personal experience, for all you cats that think It's cool to do what they think is cool, but It's really not.

Switch positions for a moment ...how would you feel If some body killed your brother?

How would you feel?

-Lil' Solid, Alameda

From The Beat: You know what gives us hope? The fact that you end this sorrowful poem with the words "To be continued." Because your story is not yet over. You can be the person who made it, the person who got out the system, and escaped the bullet. The person who can carry on the best in your brother's love for you and the best in your deepest, truest heart.

Loyalty Is A Must In Life

Chea mang, wusup wit The Beat? My heart is fully loyal to my parents and family. My history that I have with them that keeps me loyal to my family is a whole lot.

One thing that keeps me loyal to them is the fact that they will never leave me behind. They will make sure that I am ahead of my game, make sure I am on the straight, narrow path. I understand that they tried they hardest to keep me out of places like this.

I know for a fact that I put myself in this position that I am in right now. I am looking at a year at the Ranch since the judge felt that I ain't cool to go back to the community because of the gun charge.

Even though I'm going through all of this, I am being supported by my family 100 percent. They are going to be with me through that whole year I have to go do. They tell me this is a wake-up call, and I should look at life different. These are many reasons why I stay loyal to my family 100 percent no matter what anyone says.

-Lil' Rob, San Francisco

From The Beat: A year is a long time in anyone's life, but you'll still be where you and your family can see each other and give each other the support they provide for you and you provide for them. What do you think your family means when they tell you to look at this as a wake-up call? Have you been asleep? Do you need to wake up? Is it happening?

Loyalty: A Poem And A Piece

The cops is watching
 The streets is talking
 Yo' pros is unfaithful
 Yo' family ungrateful
 Yo' ninjas ain't loyal
 Yo' ninjas ain't lawyers
 And everybody saw you
 And ain't that some shhh...

I'm loyal to my family. I'm loyal to my brothas on the street. I would never do nothing to make my family or my brothas on the streets fall. I want my brothas to gain more, not less.

We eating. We ain't starving, and we never will be. One love to The Beat.

-Lil' Dre, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate the poem and the love, Lil' Dre. And we believe you when you say you would never do anything to make your family at home or on the streets fall. But by allowing yourself to be taken from your family, you can't be giving them the support they depend on from you (and we're talking about the support of love). By being here, you can't lift them up when they need it, and they can't lift you up when you need it. It's time to find a way to stay with the ones you love.

Struggles

Well, me, I'm gay and I struggle every day. My mama doesn't accept it. When she get mad at me, she calls me "dyke" and "gay 'B'." It hurts me, but I don't let that get the best of me.

My dad's side is cool with my sexual preference, but my mom, she be trippin' out. When I tell people my sexual preference they give me a look, but then they just be like, "Well, that's you," or "whatever." Then they start asking me sexual questions. But all I know is I can only be me, whether you like it or not.

-Damika, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire you for being yourself, even though that's not always easy. There are organizations that might help your mother accept you for who you are, like PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). They are nationwide, including San Francisco (921-8850). Many of the parents she would meet there have gone through exactly the same reactions toward their gay or Lesbian children, and have come to love and accept them for exactly who they are.

I'm On My Own

Sometimes, when I'm alone
 I cry, because I feel like I'm on my own

Because I feel like I need my son

He needs me

I need him beside me

I feel like I'm nothing without him here

I feel like a parrot locked up in a cage

With no say, no light, only the light from my cage

Every day an' night

Just reminiscing about everything

Wondering what he's doing

Thinking 'bout all the changes I have to do in my life

Thinkin' how I got to challenge myself

I just got to do what's best

I gotta do it not only for me

But because I have a lil' one

I got to be my boy's role model

We all make mistakes

Even though I'm locked up

That don't mean I'm a bad mom

But, you know, just got to do

What I got to do

Keep my head up high

Graduate from high school

Get my bachelor's degree

Go to cosmetology school

Feel me?

'Cause this what's really up

Late

-Monstrita, San Francisco

From The Beat: Whatever mistakes you made that led you to be separated from your son are in the past. You know what those mistakes were, so you know what you have to avoid in order to be the mother we know you can be and want to be. Take your goals one step at a time, and soon you'll be looking back from a very different — and far better — place than you are now. Good luck.

Thank You Mom

Thank you mom for having me.

Thank you mom for raising me.

Thank you mom for loving me.

Thank you mom for giving me a second chance. Thank you mom for just everything.

There's no way I can express the love I have for you and my dad.

-Young Rome, San Francisco

From The Beat: Even though you say there is no way you can express the love you have for your mom and dad, we think you've expressed it beautifully! Now, add to these beautiful words some beautiful actions that will keep you from being taken from them again.

My Life Is Worth Fighting For

Yes, it really does matter when it comes to my life. Yes, it matters whether I'm present in this life, because I feel I need to support my family. Yes, I agree, because I want to be there for my little sister. My family motivates me to continue striving each and every day to make it and fight for my life. Yes, there are efforts that are really worth it. My life is important enough to fight for, because I really care about it for my family and myself.

-A Yung Crimey

From The Beat: The questions we ask in the topic sheets are not there for you to answer, one by one, but to stimulate your thinking on the subject. Just write what's in your heart about the topic, even if you don't answer every question. What you have written is very good. Can you find a way to show your family just how much you care for them, but not doing the things that lead you away from them, and put pain their heart? You know what you have to change. Are you up to that?

Walking Away

It was Friday night and some friends decided to throw a party at Motel 6. I decided to go for just a little while because I knew that things were going to go wrong. When I got there everything was cool, then some other friends came with beer, marijuana and cocaine. I decided to leave.

The next morning one of my friends told me that the party got raided and that some of them went to county jail. Some of them were charged with possession and being under the influence.

I'm glad that I made the right choice because, had I stayed there, I would have been sent to the hall.

-Isaias, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Great! You made the right choice. We have seen many times now that you have the right idea about making better decisions and accepting responsibility for your actions. Keep it up. You will soon be out of here for good.

This Is Hell, Dude

They got me locked up in the halls
 Wearing other ninja's shirt, socks and drawe's

This shhh ain't raw...

Askin' for head calls just to use the bathroom
 But I ain't trippin' because I know I will be out soon

Eating this nasty-ass jail food

Kinda got me thinking like this is hell, dude

Only half of my mail come through

I don't get visits and this shhh got me trippin'

Man, just listen and pay attention

I'm speakin' what's real

Because I don't want you to feel this situation

-Young Loon, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your words hit home like an arrow/But are they enough to keep you on the straight and narrow?/Don't forget what it's like to be locked behind walls/The next time you're out and temptation calls/ If you want to stay free and fly like the birds/Then never forget your own very wise words!

Life Is Precious

Well Beat I think life is precious. I think people should cherish what they get, because you only live once.

Sometimes I feel like life ain't worth living. Sometimes I feel like I don't belong in this world.

My dad always tells me to do good, listen, don't break laws, but sometimes I feel like I never had a chance in this world.

What kind of life is this? Having to live poor, going from place to place trippin' if someone is gonna jump you or stick you. I'm always asking myself why I was born on this earth, when all I see is my family and friends getting hurt.

It seems easier to just put the gun to my head and pull the trigger. Just get it over with already. I guess I still want to live 'cause I still have some unfinished business.

My dad is always pushing me to do good; he wants grand kids one day, and he goes out of his way to make sure I do good. I guess I'm still here for my dad. I just don't want to let him down. If I just pull the trigger and give up, everything he did was for nothing.

-Notorious, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Life is hard, many of us get the feeling too that life isn't worth living, but that's a feeling we all have to overcome. Maybe it's from the harsh world we live in. But we have to arise above that and know that life is beautiful and worth it, even with all its suffering and tragedy. Why were you born on this earth? Maybe to turn things around. So with the support of your dad, stay strong and try to change yourself and the world little by little.

Loyalty To My Boyfriend

My heart is only for two people, God and my boyfriend, Stephen. I love the both of them very much, but my boyfriend is one of my closest friends. We have been through a lot of things together. We even got in trouble together. But that's my babe and I'm his babe, and we love each other very much. I'm faithful, because he makes me feel like a princess and he treats me like a princess. He loves me for me and I love him for him. There is nothing I would change about him. I don't feel that I have to prove myself to him. He knows all of my faults and all of my mistakes. Staying true doesn't require any work, because he is the one that I am in love with and I wouldn't do anything to hurt him, and vice versa. He encourages me to stay in school and stay out of trouble.

Like an example, he stays downtown, but it's dangerous down there, so he wants me to be safe and out of danger. He loves me, no matter what is going on. I feel that it's not right that he stays out all night, trying to make money, but other than that, I agree with everything that he does. He goes to school, has a job, and takes care of his mother and the rest of his brothers and sisters. My boyfriend always tells me that he loves me and that he would never cheat on me. Even when he went to jail, I stuck by his side. He feels that I am the only girl for him and he is the only boyfriend I would ever want. That is loyalty to me—someone who loves me for me and that will do anything to see me happy. I love him and I know that I could count on to have my back. He loves me and I love him, and that's what matters.

-Kayla, San Francisco

From The Beat: If he is all that you say he is, you have a rare relationship. But you know, Kayla, some of the mistakes that are so easy to make when you're out all night "trying to make money" can never be undone. When you (or he) put yourself in the danger zone, the consequence can be permanent. We don't want you to spend the rest of your life writing about what might have been, so we hope both of you will change enough so that you don't risk losing each other again. Next time, we'd love to read a piece as thoughtful as this one about your love for God, and what you think that requires from you.

Just Talking About Real

Yes because life is a good thing to have and too have some sucka ass person try to stop that life that you enjoy is bootsie. And being locked-up is [having] your life on the line because it's all kinds off ninjas that want to take you out. So, I fight for my life, how: by getting my education and walking away.

Even though I heard my bruhs telling me that I was a mark in their eyes because I want out, but also be smart at the same time. That's what makes me stop thinking about what others say because thinking about what others say is stupid cause if it was really beef [they] would of not believed me.

-Serque, Alameda

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a plan for your future other than jail! We're digging that. If you need some help let us know!

Loyalty

My mother has all my loyalty. Yea, I love my friends, but my mother has always been there from birth! She chose to give birth to me, through all good and bad 'till death do us part. There is no limit to the things I would do for her.

Just being in juvenile hall, I have better realized that it's my mom who comes to every court date, it's my mom who comes to see me every visiting day, it took my mother to make me the flyest female out, and it is her and God who I give thanks to with no question. I love my mama.

-Taco, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for another excellent piece. We'd love to know more about your mother. What's her story?

My Momma

Check it, these are my thoughts on these past events: I don't respect no one that's homophobic because my momma is lesbian, and if someone were to take her life over her sexual preference well then I would show everybody what fear means. They gone scream help when they see me 'cause I'm bringing hell. Straight up, that's what she choose and I respect her on top of everything. That's my momma.

-Burg, Alameda

From The Beat: Burg, we understand that you feel very deeply about your Mom and that's cool. How do you think she'd feel if she lost you? How do you think she feels about you being locked up right now? See? If you really give a damn about her then live your life right because sitting up in Juvenile Hall talking about how you'll kill and die for her because that's how much you love her sounds like a bunch of B.S. Your actions are not the same as your words. She doesn't need you to kill anyone or die for her. She needs you to live your life right! Ask her, she'll tell you the same thing!

Pain is Love

When I want to say 'NO' to the shhh you do, it fazes me.
 What else can you do to hurt me?

Obviously you ain't alert because I know that game.

One time, two times it's always been the same.

One word baby..."pain".

Considering I'm going insane mentally...no, physically...
 in all different types of ways. No, it's not just a phrase;

it's like the cut in my veins,

the stick in my heart that's tearing us apart.

The tears that fall from my eyes are a sign of pain.

But recognize the size of the problem
 you would probably be tryin' to minimize the situation
 of your destruction

in my crazy mind...truth is, love is blind and even
 though it hurts I love you.

-Stephanie, Alameda

From The Beat: What's great about this piece is how honest you are about the downside of love. Being in love with someone who causes pain in your life is something a lot of people can relate to. What types of behaviors or actions make love painful for you? And is it love itself, or the person you are with?

Ode To Our President

I represent the corrupt system.

I slang slander and lies
 and America listens.

I focus on building more prisons
 as well as oil refinery divisions.

I kill to get rich
 and stay rich by killing.

All the while the rigs keep drilling.

I don't want to build more schools.

I'd rather spawn a nation of ignorant fools.

I'll recruit more soldiers
 and stage another attack
 to persuade the upper class
 to have my back.

I'll replace mother nature
 with roads near and far,
 and build bigger, less fuel efficient,
 tar burning cars.

If you want Armageddon,

I'll be your man.

Don't worry.

I'll keep doing all I can.

-Elect Me, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: And will you be doing all you can, from inside the walls? With your talent, you could be making a difference.

What Gives You Hope

My boyfriend is the person that gives me hope.
 He brings me up whenever I'm down, and tells me what
 I'm doing wrong.

He's the reason I'm living, the reason why I quit doing
 drugs.

He's the right to my wrong, the lyrics to my song.

The bullet to my gun, the moon to my sun.

He's always there for me and I thank god he came into
 my life. Real talk.

Since day one, he's had me smiling.

He always tells me to always keep my head up and stay
 strong.

I'm blessed with a wonderful boyfriend. He gives me
 hope since I'm locked up

'cause I feel better knowing I got him.

Well, I'm doing my time for him so when I get out I'm
 going to be by his side again.

Best believe it. My man means everything to me... love
 you baby boy.

-Krissy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is one of the best love letters we have read in The Beat, because of your creative way with words. That smile must be so big that he can see it wherever he is.

To The Beat Within

Sometimes I think it's not worth it, but now I know it
 is.

I want to fight for my dreams. I want to graduate
 from high school and go to UTI. If that mean that I have
 to fight for my life to make my dreams come true; I will do
 anything. I want to make my Mom proud of me.

I think fighting for my life necessary because I'm young
 and I think I would be a great asset to my community and
 the beautiful Watsonville town. I might be messing up
 right now, but it's never too late to change. I want to
 change for my mother because I'm tired of being a source
 of her pain. I want her to cry, but because of happiness.

-Edgar, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Those are the best tears. We don't know what UTI is, but it sounds good. If you work hard and keep your dreams always in mind, your mom will be crying the good ones, soon.

Loyalty

My older sister has my whole heart and loyalty. My mom
 got killed when I was four and my dad wasn't around. So
 my older sister looked after me when I was living at my
 auntie's house.

I hear a lot of people say this in vain but I would die
 for my older sister without even thinking about it.

I am in the halls now and some people say it is her
 fault. She might have had an influence on me but in the
 end we all make our own choices.

Over the years she has shown her loyalty to me in a
 few ways. Like when I used to run home she would let me
 stay with her for a while then send me back home.

The question I ask, if you ever had to show your
 loyalty back in a bad way? When my sister was having
 money problems she asked me to start selling weed for
 her just till she got back on her feet. I knew it was wrong
 but she's all I got and I am all she got, so I didn't care.

-Jeremiah

From The Beat: That's great that you and your sister have a strong bond like that. We're not judging you and saying what you did for your sister is wrong because she is your sister. But you have to sit down and think about yourself. Would you risk your freedom and rob a bank? Why can't you just get a job and help your sister out. You had the right intentions. You just didn't do it right. You can get a job, get paid, and still help your sister out without having to go to jail or risking your life.

Just Walked Away From My Dad

Yes, I have walked and ran away! I did it when I was at my dad's house! I first felt scared when I left, but now if he calls I just hang up. I'm able to not be worried at all about him.

I used to get hecka paranoid when I ran to my mom's house, 'cause he has kidnapped me and one sis before, so I would keep all doors locked and keep the phone right in my hand. Sometimes I wonder if I stayed, would daddy get better or worse. Then, I remind myself about the times I stayed in the corner too scared to move.

If I could do it over again at this age I would tell him off, remind him of everything he's ever done, then I would spit in his face. All I think of when I see him is a worthless piece of shhh.

All I hear now is sorry, sorry, sorry. Then it happens again. Whatever, just walk away.

-Windi, Alameda

From The Beat: Your piece about this experience is so honest and important. It can be really hard to leave a dangerous situation, especially when it's with your family. It's easy to think that maybe if you had stayed things with your dad would've gotten better, but you're right - if it keeps happening the best thing to do is to get out of the situation.

Walking Away

I was ashamed when I was young because I walked away when my parents were fighting, and when I couldn't take the slamming doors and the crying. I jumped out my crib once I heard the front door slam and found my mom on the ground with two black eyes, busted lip and huge bruises all over her body.

She managed to call my aunt to take her to the hospital. When she arrived she took her to the hospital, and my uncle took care of us. And all because he was drunk, I hated myself for a couple months because I didn't do anything. But really, I was scared and couldn't do anything.

-Los, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You cannot blame yourself for any of this, Los. It is the job of parents and other adults to take care of children, and not the other way around. When your parents fought and your father hurt your mother, he forgot his primary responsibility, which was to be a father to his children. Just as your uncle allowed his love of alcohol to mean more to him than his love for the children he was supposed to be looking after. We are sorry you experienced the kind of fear no child should have to endure, and we hope it reinforces in you a desire to be the best parent you can be, when that time comes.

Crying Herself to Sleep Every Night

If you have a good friend or a girlfriend be loyal to them. Don't be getting over on them. If you make a big mistake then that friendship can be over with really fast. This girl that I used to be with was loyal to me and treated me very good. We had broken up, and she would try to talk to me and I would just ignore her all the time.

She would cry but I didn't care though. She wrote me hella letters, like an inch and a half fat, and sent it to Camp. I started reading all of it. And she would write that she would cry herself to sleep every night and write me a letter every night so she can think that the last person she is talking to before she goes to sleep is me.

I'm just tryna say, if you got a loyal person out there, keep that person... 'cause that person might be the only faithful person in your life.

-Linh, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, this is some real dedication this girl shows you. Do you remember why you broke up with her? What was the reason? Do you regret it now? Do you think that when you get out you will be together? Are there other things that have happened since you got lockdown that have made you rethink things you felt in the past?

You Know It, My Life Is Worth Fighting For!

Check it out, so don't turn the page or put it down. I know for damn sure my life is worth fighting for because of all the people I am hurting.

Day by day the things on the streets that I see and do, yup, I know I'm learning.

Grandma is crying, Grandpa is dying, and all of this never would of happened if I just stopped my damn lying.

It's time to get my sword out and battle the one bringing me down, because the devil is making my family and loved ones look and feel like clowns. I have to fight and I'm going to war.

As long as I am back home, happy, and back on my feet I don't care if I'm sore. I'm tired of living on the streets hanging out with homeless people, drinking and doing drugs. I'm going to fight for reals now, hey, hell ya that sounds more fun. Thank you Lord for being there for me...

Now, thank you "Beat" for listening to Tweety.

- Tweety, Land Of Enchantment

From the Beat: It saddens us to hear that you are back in lock up. We do hope you stick to your words this time. Don't let the "devil" back in your life, fight for your life so you don't have to see your grandma and grandpa in pain anymore. Fight so you can be free and live the life you deserve.

Parents Forgive Me

Mom and dad, I'm sorry for hurting you as much as I did. I said the first time I was sorry I would never do what I did to get incarcerated. Even though I did not do what I did the first time, I did something else.

It hurts you as much as it hurts me seeing myself in here, just tears me apart that I can't see you, the two most important people in my life.

Please mom and dad, forgive me.

-Young Rome, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's very clear that you are feeling deep remorse for what you did, and for causing pain to those who love you so much. We know that you know that remorse without change will not erase the hurt you've caused yourself and them. So we hope that you make a clear decision to stop what you've been doing that leads you here. It's easy to make promises in here when you're feeling so bad. It's much harder to keep those promises when you're out there making your own decisions again. So, don't forget what you've written. And thank you for writing it.

Advice

What's new Beat?

Well it's time to say farewell. This is my last entry in The Beat and I would like to leave some advice.

I came in August 30th, 2007, and I've been with The Beat ever since. I've seen so many faces and heard so many stories and my heart goes out to all those girls that came through here and got close with me.

Keep your head up, and don't let anyone get you down. And if the judge gives you a chance, take it, and fly with it. I see so many young people throwing their lives away for drugs, girls, guys, gangs, and other unimportant matters in life.

I'm just starting my life and I'm on my way to County. All I'm saying is - stay in school, stay home, and have much love and respect for your family. They are the ones that are going to stand by you 'til the end.

Well, much love and respect Beat. Keep touching young hearts. I'm out for vida.

-Lil' Sapita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Good advice and good luck. You can write us from the outs, when all this is behind you.

Warned Them And Walked Away

Behind my school there was an abandoned house that everybody would kick it at to smoke, etc... One day, my friends thought it would be a good idea to try and break into this house so we could smoke inside of it. What I saw, and they didn't, was that the house had an alarm on it.

The alarm was the kind that, when it is tripped, the cops come in approximately 60 seconds. When I saw this, I said to myself, "Oh, shhh. This is a bad idea".

As I was trying to tell them that the house had an alarm, one of those dummies picked up a big rock and tried to bust out the back door, which was glass. I told them that doing something stupid and childish like that was NOT worth getting locked up for. They didn't listen so I told them that I would meet them at school and I left.

About five minutes later, I heard police sirens on the street.

-Robby, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Good story and wise choice.

Should Have Walked Away

Before I did my crime I had a feeling that was just saying walk away. I didn't listen, I just felt like getting a car and some skril to buy some trees.

Now I've been locked up for eleven months. I could have been out already, but yet again I didn't walk away and instead I decided to cuss out the staff at the ranch and got failed.

Next, I went to a country ass group home in the middle of nowhere and I failed because I still couldn't walk away when the staff pushed my freaking buttons.

Now I'm 'bout to go alternative in Wyoming, hopefully I walk away before I fail this program too. If not I'll be seeing all you people locked up in YA.

All that's locked up hope you get out soon and stay out.

- Corn Bread, Santa Clara

From The Beat: WE so appreciate your honesty in this piece. We know it can be hard to not get irritated by a system that at times likes to abuse their power. But just don't pay attention to them fools. It's not worth catching extra time over. Next time just ignore them. Remember, after you're done with your time you're never gonna have to deal with the system ever again. Be smart!!

Loyalty To My Mom

There is one person that is loyal [to me], it's my Mom. The reason that she's loyal to me is because she always goes with the plan.

My Mom, she's always there for me and all my other brothers. There are things that have happened in our lives like we lost our home in a fire... that was one thing.

My Mom has six boys [and] I think she is the strongest woman in the world because so many things have happened and I can go on and on.

The reason I say that she is loyal [is] because she had all these boys and [she's] still going on with [her] life. What I mean is she is still doing the things that she has to do. My Mom works seven days a Week with no days off. I love my mom for that. I well never meet someone like that in this world.

-Reem, Alameda

From The Beat: That's cool that your Mom is and has been sticking by you and your brothers' side through it all. What can you do to show her your appreciation for all the hard work she's been putting in for you guys? What can your Brothers do to show their gratitude? Sounds like you've got a lot of work to do. Get to it. We're sure She'll appreciate it.

Hate Crimes

I really don't think hate crimes will stop. We were brought up to speak out in America. We had problems since slavery and even then it doesn't stop there. Violence or not, people have been trying to stop gay marriage. They don't have to take action physically but verbally.

There are a lot of stereotypes too that bring down groups. This country isn't a dictatorship but a democracy. We vote, we have a different opinion on things. We don't have to like one thing or hate the other (like Hitler). With that said, we choose to hate or we choose to love. That's why I think hate crimes won't ever end.

-Lai, Santa Clara

From the Beat: We appreciate you honesty on the issue. We also appreciate the fact that you think people don't need to take action physically to speak out on their beliefs. You are absolutely right that just because we like one thing, we don't have to hate the other. If you don't think hate crimes will ever end, how can they be reduced? Why do people feel like they have to resort to violence? Where do you think that hatred comes from?

A War to Survive

It's a war to survive now days 'cause AK's blaze every night. Youngstas in the streets havin' gun fights...

Is this the life God planned for us?

'Cause if it is man, it's real messed up.

Every BG on the block, we was ready for war

Disrespect our manhood and it was time to go

And them ninjas didn't think before they reacted.

They put my cousin six feet deep up in his casket -

With his mother at the funeral and the way

I'ma have to see fifty tear drops fall from her face

... and it hurts to say my young cousin is gone away

But that's the price that we pay when we enter this game.

-Rolo, Alameda

From The Beat: We could feel your pain in this heartbreaking poem, and the pain of your cousin's mother - and all the grieving family members on both sides of this war game - Not fifty tears, more like fifty million. Thank you for taking this snapshot of a picture we all need to stop turning away from.

Thinking So Much Starts Stress

I'm sittin' stuck like chuck within these four walls in my room....and I'm highly content with sittin' there.

But doin' that I think about a lot of "what if" and "why," and I also wonder about a lot of every thing...but then all that causes The Kid to start stressing.

It all starts with my thinking about my girl and all the shhh we done did, plus how much of a tease it is to talk to her two or three times a week. Then staff is telling me 'bout the cats I hung out with dying and it's messin' my head up, plus my regulars be tryin' to sell The Kid dreams. They sell wolf tickets out the ass!

But mostly what gets me is missin' out on all the important stuff... like I missed my junior year Snow Ball even though I'm supposed to be a senior. Junior Prom is comin' up of course, and basketball, and football season and mostly my squad (my brothers) and the rest of my family -- my sisters, my granny, my brotha again...and what really triggers all that is me sittin' in this burnt - out unit, waitin three months and two weeks and a couple of days just to go to camp and get out...

I shouldn't even be here, but it is what it is Fahgit the BS... all this time ain't nothing but a bull. I just deal with it and start the cycle all the way over, 'cause I go to go to my room just to sit and... THINK!

-Lil' Solid, Alameda

From The Beat: Maybe we should say we feel bad you are stuck in this situation, but we're don't. See, we can see from your writing that this time is forcing you to - well, you said it - THINK. And too many young people die - too many of the people you love are still dying, because they didn't think hard enough before they made certain decisions. If you use this time in jail to really think about your future, your life, and that difference between anger and grief, then your time in a physical lockdown might just end up being the key to escaping the lockdown of street mentality.

Episode Two

Back against the wall
 Against the odds
 Spirit seven foot tall
 I only answer to God
 Talking shhh don't excite me
 It's just slightly irritating
 Before you know it slugs penetrating.
 I guess that's why
 Statistics say slowly
 We are killing off a generation
 Pistols popping, bodies droppin'
 As a reaction of hating caught up in the streets
 Trying to reach a seat as the fliest and the wisest
 Slipping the hardest
 Because I'm the highest
 ... Then I sober up and despise it.

-T-Rex, Alameda

From The Beat: The feds might say you are the problem/but you see the horrors and it's you that can solv'em/why are you stuck here behind these walls/when you could lead the fight to CHANGE the halls/to become your dreams, take them down off the shelf/to free the world, you gotta free yourself.

Who's Hard?

Growing up in life, I was faced with hostility
 Trapped in this cell and the silence is killin' me
 I remember how it was when I first started schoo'
 If you wasn't one of the ninjas cutting up, you wasn't coo'
 The first lesson you learn is 'cause life ain't fair
 My favorite line since 5th grade is: "Ninja, step if you dare!"
 So I live my life without shame, fear or guilt
 Cause the strong survive while the weak get robbed or killed
 I've seen too much in my life to believe in justice
 Then did enough time here so I'm like ef this
 I'd rather just stay free and be with the people I love
 Instead of stuck in here with hella wannabe thugs
 Ninjas be trying to show that they the hardest from the block
 But the hardest ninjas on earth's the ninjas lyin' in a box.

-T-Bone, Santa Clara

From the Beat: This is a powerful flow, T-Bone. We think you pull it together especially powerfully in the end. You are a talented writer, so you should put your talents to use and get out of here.

Court

Well, Beat, as you can tell I didn't want to write on these topics 'cause I went to court today and it's been on my mind all day.

When I stepped in that room today I felt my heart drop because I had seen my ex-girl and her family. The court told me not to look or talk to her. That was really hard 'cause I was with her for two years. Then after I sat in that chair I heard her crying whispering to me "I love you" but the last thing they did in my court was issue about six restraining orders on me. I didn't care about them until they said her name.

So now all I can say is never do a crime in front of your loved ones 'cause you just might have to kiss them goodbye. That is why I didn't write on your topics today.

-Greeneyes, Santa Clara

From The Beat: While the legal system has punished you with time in the Hall, the real punishment for so many in your situation is the pain of isolation from the ones closest to you. These restraining orders have taught you to follow the law in the presence of your loved ones, but can you go further and look to them as a reason for being law-abiding at all times?

Stuck in the Middle

Is life worth fighting for?
 Is your life worth fighting for?
 is it worth fighting the drug
 Or maybe the guns
 How about the gangs and violence
 The racism and discrimination?
 Maybe you like to follow the crowd and be loud
 I went with the flow and ended up in jail
 Now I am biding my time till I am free
 And wishing I went against the tide
 Stuck in the middle of a truth and a lie

-Lil' Monster, Alameda

From The Beat: Where is the truth and where is the lie? Do you know the difference? Are there times when you can see it more clearly? Is it harder to see when you're drunk or high? Is it harder to see when you're locked up, or on the outs. This is a great poem, first of many, we hope.

I'm His Only Daddy

All my life I've dreamed about becoming a father. And at the age of 16, I'm going to be a father. I was so excited I went out and found a job.

I started going to school everyday on time. I prayed every day to be blessed with a healthy baby.

I have a perfect baby's mama who I want to stick with for a long time.

Everything was going good until me and my dad got into a fight. He said I'll never amount to anything and that I will never be a good dad. So I cut off my bracelet and ran away. He called the cops and said I beat his ass.

Now I'm locked up. The judge doesn't understand that I just want to get out, so I can be the best father I can be.

A lot of guys are man enough to have sex without a rubber but not man enough to deal with what comes out nine months later. But I am—I love that child to death even though it's not here yet. I want to be there for my kid, but the judge got me trapped behind these walls. I don't want my kid calling someone else daddy. I don't want him thinking that I didn't want anything to do with him when everyday I dreamt about the day he'd call me daddy. I hate myself for making that mistake and I know he will too.

-Vito, Santa Clara

From the Beat: You have such a passion for your newborn child and we admire that. We admire that you are staying strong even amidst the cowardly thing your dad did to you. We can tell you are going to make a great father and hope just like you that your dream that he will call you daddy will come true. Will your love for him be enough for you to stay out of here? We don't think he will hate you. Can you forgive yourself? Tell us how you can be a great father to him when you get out?

Confusion

How long will this face last
 The victim of a murder engraved in the past
 The system so corrupted
 Young children being abducted
 When will people truly see
 I took the justice out of me
 Knowing I would curl up heated in a ball
 Now facing the brick wall
 Wondering who would always catch my fall
 It was you who stood up tall

-Ly, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This crime may haunt you for all time/But you are far more than this terrible crime/Treasure you soul, your mind and your heart/These are gifts you've had from the start/And while steel and stone keep your body confined/No power on earth can do that to your mind/While you are both a cause and a casualty of war/There is really no limit to how high you can soar!

Waiting To Move On

What's up Beat, this Chikillo from Oakland. Well I'm just here still in the hall waiting to see what the judge gonna say when I get back to court. Well I go back soon, but the judge wants me to go to CYA because I'm gang affiliated. He said that's a good place for me, but my lawyer is trying the best he can so I won't go to CYA. But man I hope I get a last chance because I want to start a new life...

Well Beat this vato is out. Alrato, much love and respect for all out there.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: The judge is gonna do whatever s/he feels like doing. But if you want to start a new life you can start one right now. You don't need to wait for the judge to sentence you or anything. If you feel like the life you're leading right now is not coo', and you want to start a new and better life then do it. Do what your heart tells you to do.

Family Loyalty

I show loyalty to few people. I pretty much have a chosen family. That means people I choose to call family because I can't even trust most of my blood family. But it's ok because I always have my man (we're several years strong), my Gramma, and my brothers not matter what. We show loyalty to each other by having each other's backs, putting one another before ourselves and trusting each other to a certain extent.

-G's Fiance

From The Beat: You are loyal to your family, but you don't trust them completely, you say. Why is that? When do you not trust them?

Betrayed Or Foolish

Sometimes when people walk away from a situation, the older person feels angry and wants to kill, because they want to do more to that person because that person just walk away from the situation.

The person that didn't walk away, always the person that's feels angry, upset or down because they build up so much anger. That all he wants to do is hurt someone else or see some one get hurt. That is the way for that person to express their feeling at that moment. Even if it is wrong to do something to that person got one thing in his head is to hurt that person. That's when he goes to jail because he didn't make a good choice.

-Correy

From The Beat: You know that kind of mentality is going to send someone to the pen for life. Even if you feel like killing somebody, you should control your anger and emotions. And that's just plain sick. Why would someone have no value for human life? You shouldn't never hurt someone that doesn't threaten you at all, especially if they walk away. That's messed up. That's somebody's son or daughter, someone's brother, or sister, someone's best friend. Death doesn't just affect that one person but the entire community. Why is there so much anger and hate?

Go Do Your Thang!

What's up with The Beat Within? As with my homeboys, they was broke. So they were planning on doing something bad to get some money. So when they were done planning they asked me to come with them so I thought about it and said "No! Y'all go and do your thang."

The only reason why I didn't go is 'cause I thought about the consequences what's going to happen. That's one of the biggest walk aways I have done so far.

-Walking Tall

From The Beat: Congratulations! That was probably the best decision you ever made. We're glad to hear that you're thinking about the consequences of your actions. That's always a good sign. We know you're tired of this county food and clothes. Keep thinking that way and you will get far.

Gay Or Straight, Don't Matter

I know a couple of gay people, my cousin I grew up with is a girl and she's gay because of her mother passed. I don't have no problem with gay people. I think people should treat gay people the same as anyone else.

-Jamir

From The Beat: You're right we think everyone should be treated the same as everyone else no matter if they're Black, White, Latin, Australian or Asian. We're all human beings. We all eat, sleep, and bleed the same. Why do you think we treat each other so different?

What's Up With It?

This yo' boy Aaron. I've been here for like three weeks. I'm just sitting here waiting to go to court, so they could hurry up and send me to Camp Sweeney, or a group home. I can't wait to get get outta here and start my time, so I could hurry up and get back home. They tryna send me to C.Y.A. This is my last chance so I'm gonna do 9-12 months in placement.

I ain't gonna run this time, I'm tired of running from every place they send me to. That ain't gonna get me no where but right back in here. So that's why I'm gonna do my time and get it over with, so I can go back to school. I'm gonna turn 18 soon so I'm tryna get off probation before I turn 18 that's why I ain't bout to run from my placement no more. That's all I got to say for now. Peace out!

-Aaron

From The Beat: We're glad to hear say that you are not gonna run anymore. It's time for you to face the consequences to whatever you did so you can move on with your life. We know you tired of coming to the halls so do what you need to do. We're proud of you! We wish you the best of luck on wherever the system sends you. Stay focused.

Loyalty To My Man

Ok, this is Melissa. Ok, I was loyal to this man, 21 years old. Ok, me and him was going out for a cool minute like 9 or 10 months; he was my first of everything. Like, he loved me so much he would ignore every girl that tried to get at him. I did everything for him. But we broke up because of the age difference. I'll wait 'till I'm 18 years old to get with him again. That's two years from now.

Yea, we still talk because he's my first love, yea I'm still always gonna be his ride-or-die chick, yea I'm still his hyphy-wifey type. I'm still his only lady he would want. In those 10 months we never got into one fight. He always told me everything. Well all I know is our love will never die.

He dedicated that song to me "Difference-Genuwine." Lil' E, I love you 'till the end of time - forever-and-ever.

-Melissa

From The Beat: Love and loyalty come hand in hand - you can't have one without the other whether it's a relationship, friendship or family. Waiting for someone shows love and loyalty too. But is it all roses and sweetness? What challenges await you in the future? Is he someone who will help you stay free and out of jail?

Walking Away, Please!

If I had a chance to walk away from this gang life I would. But how could I? I done too much shhh to just walk away now. It's like you studied so hard for the GED but the day of the test you you don't want to take it, because you think you have a GED then you a nerd. Haha. I don't know, man, it's insane though. How can I just walk away? This ain't no weekend thang. This is a life style.

-Linh

From The Beat: You're gonna have to make up your mind sooner or later. That lifestyle is only gonna guarantee more trips to jail, and hospitals and probably funeral homes

Worth Living For

My life is worth living for. There is this special girl named Bri, she motivates me to stay alive. Without her I probably wouldn't be where I'm at in life. I've come to Juvenile hall twice over her. I've cut off my EMP once to see her, and another time left my EMP on and went and saw her. Both times I got arrested going to see her. It wasn't worth it but it was at the same time, because I got to see her and not really because I got locked up for a much longer time then I saw her.

The first time I got arrested right in front of her, her sister, her mother, inside their house. This girl means the world to me. I've risked my freedom to see her twice.

-James

From The Beat: That's nice that you have special feelings for this girl. But if you really do like her the way you say you do you should follow all the rules on EMP. Why can't she come over your house dude? Seeing her for just an hour isn't worth your freedom man. Come on handle you business properly, get off EMP so you can see her whenever you feel like it and not have to risk going to jail.

Walk Away

What's up Beat. This your homeboy Chikillo.

The first time I walked away it was when I was with my girl in the park, we were chilling, having fun and all kinds of stuff. Then some ninja came up to me and my girl and was talking hella smack. He said he wanted to fight me, but I just walked away with my girl because I was with my girl and I was having fun so I didn't want to have any problems. That was the only time I walked away.

Well Beat this vato is gone alratos.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: Walking away from the fight just shows how much of a bigger man you were. If you want to change your lifestyle or at least stay out of jail, you're gonna have to mature and grow up and let that drama go. If chilling with your girl keeps you out of trouble then keep chilling with her.

My Uncle

Someone who I was looking up to when I was younger was my uncle. When I was younger I would do any thing my uncle told me to because I always want to hang out with him and his friends. And no one could ever tell me something bad about my uncle.

-Jack

From The Beat: Is your Uncle still around for you? If so, we're sure he'd love to hear everything you just wrote.

Loyalty To My Boyfriend

My boyfriend has my heart I can say. Maybe not my whole heart but I feel loyal to him in many ways because my feelings for him are strong, so strong like he's almost my brother. I'm so attached to him because he's always been there for me and had my back no matter what. He always understood me and my problems like he has been through it wit' me all my whole life...I am indeed faithful to him because he makes me feel good and also because he's special of course. My actions towards being with him can be crazy a bit sometimes but when it all comes down to it I'm here to stay and he's mine. I shall call what we share special cause not only is he my friend but he's the love of my life...

-Lil' Shay

From The Beat: This is a beautiful piece about a strong-sounding relationship. We'd like to know- what does he think about the fact that you are in jail? Will he help you stay out so you don't end up in here again?

True Loyalty

Loyalty means being true to your ninjas and your ninjas being true to you. Like for instance if we go give some ninjas a dose or if my ninjas need some money I would give my ninjas some money if they ask because they would do the same for me. I love my ninjas and all my ninjas love me... I love all my ninjas.

-P-Team

From The Beat: What does being true consist of? The loyalty you speak of has conditions. It's dependent upon what you think they can do for you like some type of financial trade agreement. Is that true loyalty or a trade-off?

Walk Away

What's good Beat? I'm here writing you about the things I would do is walk away from the crowd you is with or be with. You got to walk away from them because you might not know what they be doing or what they gonna do something. The other reason why I would walk away is because you probably hanging around with some bad people that be influencing you bad stuff

-Baby Al

From The Beat: You're right man. You can't always follow the crowd 'cause that doesn't necessarily mean that they're up to something good. You have to be a leader not a follower. That following the next man is not gonna get you anywhere in life.

What Is Love?

What is love?

To me it's a played out game,
With no fortune or fame.

What is love?

A game made to lose,

'Cause in the end you come out looking like a fool.

What is love?

It's a played out four letter word that has brought me nothing but pain.

What is love?

The love I speak of comes in vain,

But leaves me heartbroken and furious at the sound of one's name!

-Sexy and Sophisticated

From The Beat: This is a deliciously bitter poem. We dig it!

My Life

What's up - let me tell you a little about me. I am 17 years old. This is my fifth time in here. As I sit in here day by day I keep reminiscing on my past - then I start to think to myself and tell myself that I was stupid, because I was thinking about what I had done to get in here, but I didn't think about it before I did the crime. Now I sit in my cell mad as heck prayin' to "God" to get me out of jail.

The first time I came here I was fourteen years old and I told myself that I was never coming back. But as the years went on and I think how it's 2008 and I'm 17 and this is my fifth time here I think that I didn't do well 'cause I'm still here. But as I sit in my cell I know that I'm not comin' back 'cause I 'bout to be 18 in five-months so there ain't no more Juvenile hall for me.

When I turn 18 I don't want my name in the system nor do I ever wanna see the day I be locked away again.

-Adriane

From The Beat: We too hope this is the last time you are in jail! But clearly, this has been your plan before, and it hasn't gone well. What are you going to do differently this time? What is your plan for staying out of trouble?

Love At First Site

I met Jimmy at a burrito truck. I fell in love instantly when I saw him (I call her a him because she think she's a boy). Well, we've been together for a minute.

A lot of females are hating 'cause they wanna be with him, but he loves me. We've been goin' through it. A lot of people disapprove of our relationship. But it's okay, I don't trip off of them. I love my baby, that's all that matters. I miss my baby a lot. When we get out of jail, we gonna be together!

-Skittlez

From The Beat: What challenges do you face as a couple?

Loyalty

To me my girlfriend and my mother have the [best] loyalty for me that a person can get. Why I said my girlfriend is because we have been together for four years and counting and she has one half of my heart. The other half of my heart goes to my Mother.

My Mother is the woman that was there for me the whole way out. My Mother is 34 going on 35 and she has been there for me all my life and I will always love her.

-Tommy

From The Beat: We feel that... but like we keep saying over and over again: love can't just be a "word" loosely tossed around. You have to put that into action. Show these people you love them... if you're not in school on the outs then get into school and go everyday. Stay away from the "block" and cats that's messing up. If you're using E-pills, Trees, Drank or whatever then stop. Don't just say you love these people, demonstrate it because you're not the only person that gets hurt when you're doing bad... they get hurt as well. That's real Love. Feel that? No ifs-and-or-buts handle it or you're just lip professing.

Loyalty Is Huge

My family is the most loyal, they also been there for me. I don't got to go too far because my family raised me, so if anybody say they know me better than my family, I'll say they're lying to themselves. My family encourages me about school and stuff like that, and about how I need to take care of myself better than what I'm doing now. I never have to prove my loyalty to anyone in my family - just my friend and my boyfriend.

-Keliana

From The Beat: Do you listen to your family when they encourage you to excel in school, and be good to yourself? If not, why not?

Once Loyal

I was loyal to my friend because I went to jail for something he did. I could've got out if I would've told who it really was, but I was loyal to him.

-Jubbar

From The Beat: Doesn't sound like your friend is/was a friend at all. If he was a true friend he would've rode his own beef. You have to be more mindful of those you choose to call your friend.

Beef

What's up Beat? Today's topic I choose from my self is beef. Ninjas be beefin' for nothing... beefin' because they're from different areas. To me that shhh's hella ancient. [I think the] only time a ninja should beef is when him and his rivals have personal problems.

-B

From The Beat: The sad part is that the turfs people are beefing over are the same turfs, the only difference being the names of the turfs. Every turf in Oakland, San Francisco, Vallejo, San Jose, L.A., Chicago, New York etc. are the same: Under educated, poverty stricken, predominately people of color struggling to survive. It's sad! What can you do to help change it? No, what are you going to do to help change it?

That Loyalty

I'm only loyal to my family and my squad.
Loyalty is major to me.

There is nothing better than loyalty...

-Vell

From The Beat: It's been our observation that most of the time when severe situations come up and long jail sentences are getting tossed around the squad falls apart but peoples' families remain loyal. Is your loyalty stronger for your family or your squad?

Why Can't I Choose For Presidency

The reason I can't vote is because one: this is maybe a once in a lifetime chance.

To my knowledge if I were to choose Hillary then a lot of things would change; if I were to choose Obama I would also have to admit that even more things would change. But the main reason I would not vote is because I don't want to be known as a sexist or a racist. With Obama every black person in the world would want things and would keep asking him to do things, if he [refused] I figure a lot of people would go on strike or something.

With Hillary I figure a lot of cities would have a worse curfew because every women cares and worries about young people and want them to be safe.

-Tommy

From The Beat: What if every one able to vote didn't vote out of fear of being called a racist or sexist? Also, no matter who's elected as president there are going to be millions of people with millions of demands/request... that's just the way it is... and a lot of them aren't going to get what they want and a lot will go on strike and protest. And lastly, it would be comforting if "every Women" cared and worried about young people... but that's just sadly not the case. For example there have been Women as well as Men who've done terrible things to young people through out history. I want go into detail... just watch the News. We need a whole lot more good people in positions of power to help shape the world into a better place which is why you should vote... regardless of what other people may or may not call you because of the person you choose to vote for.

Loyal

I have two potnas that I'm very loyal to and they're very loyal to me. The way we became so close is [due to us] being around each other for a while and we all like each others' style. When we first met we didn't really hit it off.

My two potnas are brothers so if one didn't like me the other wouldn't either. But like I said, over time we became close to each other and I started looking at them as my lil' brothers. I stayed loyal to them and when I got locked up I was going to ride it out, but somehow they got caught up. I hope we will be able to work pass this one day.

-Ricky

From The Beat: Hey, we hear you and we feel where you're coming from, but we had to edit out a lot of what you wrote. We have guidelines as far as what we allow inside The Beat... you know that!

Loyalty Real Or Fake?

Cats nowadays say they're loyal to the game but when they go down and the police start throwing them years in their faces they start braking down and telling. But God knows the real from the fake. That's why I tell God to watch over me cause haters try to knock me down. Forgive me for my sins lord.

-Pk

From The Beat: The thing is, if you're doing the right thing you don't have to worry about anyone snitching. Snitching is a part of the "game." It's to be expected. On top of that, the system ain't playing a "game" when it comes to that time they keep passing out. Keeping it real, the risks are to high to be out here "playing" ... the game is played out. It's time to get that piece of paper from a University and get that good paying job. School is free... the only hustle you have to put down is hustling to class everyday to put in your work. Feel that?

Mind Games-Mixed With Love So Krazi

Yeah, it's most definitely my mind taking over, forcing me to think about you. Never is there a day that passes when your presence finds dreaming reality that floats through my mind without cause.

Your touch that I constantly wish to embrace envelops me with stress to have and receive your love. I do investigations anytime a sudden mistake or movement happens. I seem to think it was you in my presence hunting me. If I try hard enough I see you clearly with my eyes. You appear like a shadow in a ghost figure that sends chills up my spine, then I melt like neglected ice.

True love has a variety of real emotions that does its job without permission. If it's been enough it just happens like mandatory photographic memories of you that I show in my head like a movie in slow motion. I prefer to hold onto the thought of getting a chance to see you in any way or form.

Your voice is like heroin to my ears, you is like handcuffs too tight to my heart, like a knife slicing someone's throat, like fire in cold wavy water, like stress of a funeral, it's crazier than crazy how you have me. It's your romantic nature I'm addicted to.

Your participation in my eagerness for affection makes me want to love you more than I can. Looking into your eyes helps me read your desire perfectly. Your mind is creative and your imagination proves the most intelligent character. Your heart is tender and selective, your aggressiveness attracts me even if it's violent.

I dream big for you like it's my dream yet to be accomplished. I pray for you like a grandmother prays for her grandchildren and family. I worry like a mother of her child. I read you like a 300 page book, like I'm confident of all the definitions of your personality. I miss you like you're dead and buried away in the ground, I love you so much it hurts.

-Miss Stanley

From The Beat: It's heart warming to hear how much you care about this person, but we want you to focus some of that love and worry and prayer for yourself!!! YOU need this love and affection yourself—so that you can be strong enough to stay out of jail. What are your thoughts on that? Could you write a love letter to yourself?

Faith In My People

Loyalty means your faith to your ninjas. They do anything for me and it's the same towards them and they give me money when I need it and I do the same; or we go to the mall and go get exclusive then get high and ride around and find a female, and I shoot a ninja for my ninjas and they do the same thang for me.

-Lost In Oakland

From The Beat: A real friend will never lead you into nor condone you rushing off into trouble or danger! A real friend doesn't want anything from you except to see you successful and happy in life... and free! How many real friends you got? How many people can you honestly say you've been a real friend to? Think about that! When you speak about your homies and yourself, death and destruction are the main things you are focused on... that aint friendship! THINK!

Walk Away

Well I was in juvenile hall and this dude wanted to fight. And at the same time I was going to be getting released if I basically behaved myself. So I just avoided the whole situation because I wasn't about to risk my release for the next ninja.

- Mee

From The Beat: That's right! Shake the hate and do it moving. Why can't everyone use their brains like that? Good job.

Faith

Ok, for real God I been praying the same prayer, crying and asking you.

Every time it seems like you don't hear me, but of course, since I know better,

I know you do. I promised I wouldn't lose my faith but I did a couple of times. Confused, then I prayed on that too.

Sometimes I feel like I'm not good enough.

You know I'm not perfect, no one is, but I try God I really do.

Sometimes I do fall short but it's been a long time and a long way that I came.

I see nothing wrong with giving me freedom, it's that too much to ask?

-Miss Stanley

From The Beat: What do you think will help you achieve freedom? Not just in the short run, but in the long run? What would help you stay out of the hall?

Hood Loyalty

The thing that has my whole heart, is my hood. I would do about anything for it, but there are a couple things that I don't cross the line for. I've been living there almost all my life, and growing up in the hood, one of the major things that I learned is to be loyal to it. If you're not going to be loyal to it why put it in your mouth.

Now-a-days everybody wants to gang bang, but they are going to come across that test to see if they're loyal, and that's when the loyal people separate from the suckas.

Me, I'm also loyal to myself. I got a lot of pride and if I let my pride down I feel worthless. I represent my hood where ever I'm at. But if somebody tells me to do something I don't want to do, I don't do it and I still get respected for that... 'cause if I do something that don't sound right and then get caught for it they're not going to be in jail, I am. And if my homies ain't loyal, at least I know I'm doing my part.

-Ott

From The Beat: It's one thing to have pride and a totally a different thing to ride for something doesn't belong to you. That Hood, although you grew up there, doesn't belong to you, man! Realize and separate the fake from the real! Don't throw your life in the gutter... THINK! When it all comes down all you got is YOU and maybe your blood relatives... ride for that and only when absolutely necessary! You know exactly what we're saying to! These people aint playing... they're charging youngsters as adults and sending them away for long periods of time... does that sound like a game or a joke? Focus-up!

Violence

Sometimes situations happen in which you have to make critical decisions, sometimes spontaneously and without thinking. When people get into arguments and anger and pride take over their minds many times, especially with young people, [they] react in blind violence. In some situations I act angrily and handle my business but sometimes I wish I could take a second and think [about] my choices before I dig myself [into] a problem with the law... especially if I'm already in deep stuff. I think ignorant fools should stop thinking with their fist and [use] their brains before they run themselves out or end up in a grave.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: The first act of violence starts in the mind of the individual. If we all took a step back to think before we acted violently or otherwise the world would be a better place. Unfortunately that's not the case. However, you yourself are aware of what may trigger you to commit a violent act and awareness is the key. Like they say: "knowing is half the battle." Each one teach one. So if you work on yourself your actions will be an example for all who see you on what to do when those situations arise.

Me And My Man

When I think about you, do you know what comes to my mind? Kisses and hugs and all the good times. Being with you is like floating on the clouds, and if you think like I do, you know what I'm talkin' 'bout. Yes, being with you is perpetual bliss, and you know I could care less about material shhh. Diamonds and gold don't mean nothin' in my world, 'cause in all reality I'm just happy to be your girl. I just want you to love me, be down with who I am, forget them other girls – they can't love you like I can. Yea, we fight a lot, but our fights don't last long. All of our arguing only makes our love strong.

You ask about Skittlez, they say that's Mrs. Jimmy right there, and you always know I'm comin' 'cause of my goldish blonde hair. You try to make fun, say my hair match my skin, then I try to beat you up, but you know you always win. You say you change females everyday like you change your white tee, but I'm still here that's why females don't like me. They want to take my place, they want you over there, but you tell them "uh-uh Skittlez ain't goin' nowhere."

Yea, you my dude and you treat me real good. Hey you remember that day you taught me how to get to the hood? You had me hoppin' fences and shhh, man I thought you was crazy. But then I realized that you was only tryin' to train me. You said if somethin' happens then this is what I do, then you looked me in my eyes and said it's because I love you. I cry myself to sleep at night thinkin' 'bout my boo. I just love you so much I hope nothin' happens to you.

You over there in jail they holdin' you at Santa Rita, I miss you to death, I wish that I could go see you - pay you a lil' visit. Yea, go and see my man, but you know I'm underage so you know that I can't. I'm doin' time for my man but you know what? That's alright, 'cause I'ma ride for my man every day and every night. I'm your ride or die chick 24/7, 'cause in my eyes baby you was truly sent from heaven. I know you love me baby, I can feel it in my heart and we both feel that pain that we feel when we apart. It's Skittlez and Jimmy always and forever, and I suggest you stick with me 'cause ain't no other female better.

I love you bay-bay that's what you always say to me. Seeing you smile is what really makes me happy! Yea when we get out we'll do hecka much, baby words can't explain how much I really miss your touch. I get that feeling in my stomach some people call butterflies, and I know you feel it too when I look into your eyes. Our relationship is real, ain't no doubt in that, you can't begin to imagine how much I truly got your back. We been there for each other through the thick and through the thin, even when Martina came and tried to take my man. I almost shot her in the face and you know that this is true but you calmed me down and said can't nobody take me away from you. It's us forever and always, and we plan to be together until the end of our days.

I'm finally gonna end this shhh man, I'm finally gonna be through so let me end it like this, Jimmy I love you!

-Skittlez

From The Beat: Your passion and love is wonderful to read. When you think of the future, what do you imagine for the two of you? Right now, you are both in jail... how can you support each other so that you can both stay free and don't continue to spiral out of control?

Walking Away

Walking away from the hood might cost me my life but I'm willing to take the risk.

-Frank Nitty

From The Beat: If you use the same amount of energy getting yourself together that you exerted in "The Hood drama" you'll be cool. You've got to want it though... bad! Can't let anything or anyone take you off of your path. The Beat salutes you. It's a hard step to take, but a good step!

Is My Life A Life Worth Fighting For

Yea, it matters when it comes to my life because when I'm in here I'm fighting for my life to get out of here. I want to be free to live my life so I don't have to ask anybody for anything.

It matters when I'm present because when I get out I'm gonna start changing my life so when I die I know people around me are going to be happy with everything I did. There are only two people that I would be there for no matter what: my family and my girl. I will die for them because I love them.

God gave me life so I'm going to fight for life until I can't fight no more. What makes me fight for my life is my mom, because I want to make her happy, because I'm always screwing up. So that's what makes me fight for my life.

-Kevin

From The Beat: You said you would die for your family and your girlfriend... maybe it would be a better idea to live; not just for them but for yourself. You're of no use to them or anyone else dead. And once you do get out of there if you start doing the things you know you should be doing then maybe you won't have to fight for your life! Everything starts with you... in your head... your thoughts. Get your mind right and other things around will begin to fall in place!

I Need A Girl

(Chorus)

I need a girl and she gotta be right
Golden brown skin, glowin' harder in the light.
The type of girl I could make my wife
The good looks that would have u thinking like.

(Verse)

I need a girl ;I could call my boo
When I say I love you she say I love you
When we began the day man we gotta take it slow
There's a lot of hatch that's just how it go
Had the girl, man, she be droppin' bombs
Took me to her house just to meet her Dad and Mom
Every time I got a question they just walk on by
I looked back at her and she caught my eye
But I guess I wasn't good because I didn't skate
People say I acted fake but they like to hate
And the ones that do hate is way to late
Ya'll on the first peace I already ate the cake.

(Chorus)

I need a girl and she gotta be right
Golden brown skin glowin' harder than the light
The type of girl I could make my wife
The good looks that would have u thinking like

(Verse)

I need a girl looking just like a supermodel
Body shaped right, tight like a coke bottle
Man I'm only sixteen but I'm that grown shhh I want a
girl that's to cute for the street
And girl I got a scrapper with mahogany seats
I'm like spider-man I keeps it moving/ my game so tight I
could have a love reaction
And when I spit the truth I'm like the main attraction
Have you and your best friends buying tickets to see me
All the pretty-boys trying hard to be me
But check this out I'll keep it real with you
I could take you shopping but never pay your bills boo

-Toni Da King

From The Beat: You've got to get out of here and put that on deck... you've got talent!

Can't Find Loyalty

Loyalty is a good word but hard to believe in. When I was on the outs I felt like I was loyal because how I came through for people. Since I was loyal I thought my ninjas was loyal, but now since I'm in a real difficult position I learned I ain't got no real loyal ninjas. It's hard to find. Loyalty is one of a kind, it's very hard to find.

-Loyal to who?

From The Beat: Now that you see that all you really have is you, what's next when freedom comes? The block? The homies? School? Just putting it out there!

Young Man's Case

Mama stressing everyday because her baby in jail.
He don't know freedom because he locked in a cell.

Everyday is another day he's alone

Gotta pray two times a day, God send him home

He go to court in a few days to get sentenced

Worried about his case 'cause he know there's a witness.

The judge offered him 15 with an L

It could have got lowered, but he took the deal.

Now the young man thinking about his life

Any way it go he know he's gonna die.

Now the young man thinking he should do it soon

Two hours later they found him dead in his room.

-Young Marco

From The Beat: You've got skills dude. What are you going to do with them when you get out? Keep writing man, keep writing! Best of luck with your life!!

Worse Day Of My Life

The worse day in my life is when my family got robbed. We were living in Hayward, I was six, and four ninjas ran inside the house and they duck-taped us up and had guns up to our heads and they taped my mouth and said they would kill me if my moms didn't give them money. She gave them a ring and \$500 then they left the house and my moms was scared and I felt bad 'cause I was too young to do anything.

-Lil' D-Nice

From The Beat: If you were older when that happened who's to say that you'd still be breathing or not for trying to stop them? Life is worth more than material possessions. You can always get those things back but once you're dead, that's it.

Yes, To Life

Is my life worth fighting for? Yes! I love myself.

Right now I'm upset at my life because I messed up badly and it could of cost me my life. But when I get out it's going to be good. I feel I have to fight to help my brothers because they don't have a father. And I want to be supportive of them as well as my Mother. She stresses that my life is worth fighting for.

I became a baller to have racks and if possible to have mills. My life's worth fighting for because I want to see my kids have kids and their kids have kids.

My life worth fighting for because God gave it to me and no ones taking it away with out a war. My life is worth fighting for because I'm going to become someone important. My life's worth fighting for because I want to see all my homies at the end.

Is your life worth fighting for?

-Rob

From The Beat: Other than the "baller" part, you seem to have a lot to live for. What are you going to do to make those things a reality?

Your Honor

My name is Mateo and I'm a resident here at juvenile hall. I'm writing this letter because I am looking at doing some time either at camp or YA.

I've been here at least three times and I don't make excuses for my behavior because everything I've done, I've done because I wanted to. I am asking for your help.

I grew up with a Mom and Dad but they were not around much and I basically raised myself. I found friends in the streets because at least I knew that they cared about me. I never had anyone tell me the difference between right and wrong.

-Mateo

From The Beat: We hear you Mateo. A lot of us here at The Beat have been down the path you talked about. And we know things are/ can be rough. Right now there may be some time you have to serve for what ever reason you're in there... we don't know that reason. However, you're going to have to sit down and make a plan... a serious plan for what you want to do with your life when you reach the other end of this dark tunnel and come out on this side of the fence. Your life is in your hands... and it aint over with until you give up on yourself. Believe in yourself and push forward. Don't let the time break your spirit! Keep writing and stay in touch with us. We're living proof that success is achievable when you put positive thoughts into action. Stand strong and never give up!

Worse Day In My Life #2

Was on Jan 12/08 I turned myself in for my patna, 'cause he was about to do three years for something I did and I felt bad about that.

-Lil D-Nice

From The Beat: It takes courage to stand up and hold yourself accountable for your actions. We admire your strength! On the other hand, when you stop doing the wrong things you don't have to account for them. Get right!

Loyalty To My Mom

My Mom is the only person I'm 100% loyal to. [She's] the only person I've ever loved to death. Every time something happens to me, it's my moms that's hurt the most. When I'm in jail she's stressing just as much. She accepts all my collect calls. She comes to visit me when she can. And I appreciate every thing she does for me. I would do anything for her because I know she would for me. Even if I'm wrong in every way she'll always be behind me. She always wants me to do better no matter what; she'll give up the world for me so I'd give my life for her.

-Nam

From The Beat: She needs you alive and doing good not getting into trouble or sitting in a jail cell. If you care for your Mom as much as you say you do then demonstrate that love... not just words: DEMONSTRATE IT! Show her by the things you do and not just by the things you say!

Loyalty To My Homies

I'm loyal to my hood as in homies. I only mess with the solid homies. I am loyal to the game and that's how I'm gonna go out. I grew up with my homies, so everyone was like family to me, like brothers and sisters, cousins, OG'S, was like uncles these people I mess with was loyal to me my whole life and some of them are really related to me. I'm loyal to them.

I know with the people I live my life with, I don't have to prove my self to nobody and they is cool with that and if they not they can kick rocks.

-Jesus

From The Beat: We hear you, but really ain't feeling you. There is a long line of people who've come and gone through all that "stuff" you're talking about and some ain't coming home. They threw their lives away over the same crap you're talking about! Think we're lying? Go ask your OGs, the double and triple OGs will keep it real, homie! You got sense in your head... use it!

A Ninja's Loyalty

I'm loyal to my family and like six of my ninjas. I aint loyal to everybody only to real ninjas cause it's a lot of fake ass ninjas out there.

My loyalty is just because my ninjas and family would get down for me and I'd get down for them.

Another thing is I don't have to prove myself to anybody. Ninjas be actin' to much and ain't nobody filming. You ninjas be yourselves dog. I would never have to do something I don't want to do. Because if I don't want to do it I aint gone do it. I'd be loyal if I just got out from doing time and my Mama wanted me to get down. I'm gone be loyal to my Mama and stay home.

-Rolex

From The Beat: We've noticed that a lot of the "Loyalty" pieces are about hurting people or killing and dying. What happened to being loyal to your girlfriends? Or Grandma and Grandpa when they need the grass cut or the garage cleaned up or the car washed? Or to Moms when she asks you guys to stay out of trouble... go to school... get good grades and go to college [which is free by the way]? Why does being loyal entail death and suffering? You guys need to focus on living more and staying away from "bad" people! Like you guys keep saying: no one can make you do anything you don't want to do. So, you guys actually wanted to get locked up? Your actions are manifestations of your thoughts... get your mind right!

Live From Juvenile Hall

This county life is hella boring.

I can't wait until they release me from this ancient ass place.

I could be doing some other stuff besides sitting in this little ass room

but I aint tripping. I'm gonna get out and do my thang and then it's over;

but it might not be over, I might do something else.

What do you think I should do?

-Boo Nasty

From The Beat: Nahhhh Boo, what matters is what you yourself think you should do. You know right from wrong. Each one has consequences: you do wrong you reap negative results; you do right you reap positive results! It ain't on us, it's all about you and what you want out of life for yourself. You want to keep yourself in jail you know how to do it. You want to stay free you know what you have to do. All you guys in that unit who contributed to this workshop need to focus up and stop using The Beat to talk shhh. Y'all know the rules and guidelines... how we get down. We come in there Week after Week LOYALY and FAITHFULLY. We ain't there to play so "keep it real or keep it to yourselves" is what's up.

Loyalty to The 'Hood

My block has my loyalty and the people on my block have it too. I don't have to do anything to prove myself.

Fortunately my past reputation speaks for itself to those that know me but unfortunately it has become a block in the road of my life.

For my people staying true requires never goin' out, stayin' solid at anytime regardless of the situation, don't be no punk. They show me how loyal they are in many ways, not only by backing me up when needed but by keeping me going with their letters and telling me to stay strong.

To me, loyalty run deeper than anything else. Without loyalty you can't be my patna, you must be loyal to the game.

-Burg

From The Beat: Loyal to what game? Who's playing a game? The system? They're sending people like you away for long periods of time... they aint playing! You said: "My Block has my loyalty..." When did you buy that Block... how much is property taxes every year? Or are you going to pay for it with your life and the suffering of your family when they lose you to that Block America owns? Wise up! Quit Playing! The Beat goes on!

Worth Living For

My life is worth living because I have a family that loves me, and another family, a baby momma and a son. If it weren't for them I wouldn't be doing so well in here.

I also stay up writing my lil' sister. We write each other and laugh with each other in every letter.

What also keeps my life worth fighting for is me growing up being something in life. I know God put me here to do something other than crime.

If I can just stay focused on my life and start trying to do good [and not] negative [things] I could maybe be a good role model. Sometimes I think that life is nothing when I'm mad or lonely in my room.

Life is just another problem for God if you don't get it right. It makes him think that he did his work for nothing. That's sad!

To sum it all up: my life is good even though I'm locked up I have a new life I put on this earth and he means a lot to me. I love him.

-Young Disciple

From The Beat: You said if you focused on your life and started "trying" to do good you could "maybe" be a good role model. Stop thinking about "trying" to do good and do it. There's no one remotely controlling you to do bad things... you choose to do good or bad things yourself. If you want to do bad you don't "try" to do it... you think about first and do it. So if you want to do good don't "try" to do it... make a plan and do it! And as for your child, if you're not around for him to look up to he's going to find someone else to look up to and you may not like his choice, feel that? Stand up and step into your greatness!

Loyalty Is Important

Loyalty is something that is very important to me. If you can't be loyal, I can't mess with you. I can't trust you if your not a loyal person. It doesn't matter what I heard about you on the streets, I need to find out about you myself. Another thing that comes with loyalty is respect. If you can't gain my respect and be loyal, you might as well do it movin'.

On the real. Well I'm out. Stay up beat.

-Jake

From The Beat: Do you hold yourself to those same expectations and standards, on the real?

My Loyalty

My loyalty is to my self and then my family and then my hood and squad. But anyways people always ask me why are you loyal to your squad. I tell them like this: I'm only loyal to my real ninjas because my real ninjas loyal to me. Man, I love my ninjas and all my ninjas love me because I act an ass with these ninjas, cut class with these ninjas, cried with these ninjas, got money with ninjas. Shhh, we even wore each others' clothes.

-Turk

From The Beat: Free your mind! When all that dream smoke clears and the true reality sets-in lets hope it aint to late for you. Where the mind is the body follows. When the mind is in the gutter... you know the rest! Better wise up Turk!

Loyalty Is Deep

I'm loyal to my family in my friends and my ninjas.

But all ninjas aint loyal.

Yes my life is worth living.

But you got to live like everyday your last day.

-Joshua

From The Beat: Hell nahhhh, when you're out here living stupid you have to live like each day is your last. Get it right! You know what the real is! You can't slide that past us. Where's your head, Josh! Well pull it out and focus up!

Loyalty Is Crucial

I'm loyal to my brother and my brother is loyal to me. We've been doing everything together. We get girls together; we do everything together. I love my brother, but now I'm going to do my best to do right. I am going to look out for my brother. And if he were in my position he would do the same. That's my ninja for life. When we get older [y'all] gone see us on the TV screens, posters, and them magazines. Feel me? So that's who I am loyal to, and who's loyal to me.

-Freeman

From The Beat: Your Brother sounds like a cool dude. True loyalty is hard to come by. Cherish that. The world is out here waiting for you to change it. Hold your head up and step into your greatness!

Loyal To The Circle

I'm loyal to most of my family. I'm loyal to my circle, all my ninjas, feel me? They know it's loyalty of ninjas couldn't mess with us.

My life [is] worth fighting for. While in jail some of us fighten for our lives, dawg.

-Keith

From The Beat: How many of your loyal "ninjas" have you received letters from or seen at your court dates since you've been inside? Not just this time but of all the time's you've been inside? You don't need to respond to this... just answer it for yourself and think about it! Loyalty is a strange thing... when you're in a tight spot over time, the Homies turn their backs, the Girlfriend strays away and all that's left is you... fighting for your life/freedom! Be loyal to yourself!

My Life Is A Life Worth Fighting For

I feel that my life is a life worth fighting for because if you don't fight for your life your life can get taken at any given moment. I'm not saying that fighting will keep me alive but it sure is worth giving it a shot! Or is it not? I guess I'll never know 'cause one day I'm still gonna die so screw it.

-Droopy

From The Beat: We all have to leave this earth some day but what's important is what we do between now and then. So we at The Beat do not say: "... screw it!" We push forward and do what's positively necessary to live our lives to the fullest. It's not about fighting for our lives... it's about making the right decisions so we don't have to fight.

Loyalty

Let me tell you something about being loyal. Man I had this one girl man she really liked me but I couldn't see it. So I was doing her wrong putting her through hella shh, But she kept coming back because she loved me. But I came to jail. She put some money on her phone so I respect it.

-Lil' Beazal

From The Beat: So do you realize how much she cares about you now? You should return the loyalty to her also if she's loyal to you.

Loyal To My Girl

Loyalty is a lot of things like being in a relationship with your female and things that you could do that nobody else can do. Don't cheat, don't lie, just keep it real and kick it. Just basically be faithful and be respectful. Don't put your hands on her and love her for her. Don't just be with her just to hit it then quit it. And be with her 'till the end. And this is my loyalty.

-Derik

From The Beat: That's pretty much a perfect relationship you're describing right there. So what's up with you?

RIP GG

Look where I go from here
Just lost my grandma last year
But I still remain to keep it real

Like dolla bills I drop tears
Can't believe my granny is gone
Granny come home

Why you left us all alone

Look I'm coming granny just wait at them gates
I'm gonna be running granny arm open eyes wide

Fo' the love to watch me come up from scrub
Now u see yo' grandson riding everyday on dubs

But I wish I could share these times wit you
It got me pissed this family and my momma too

But please granny wont you come back?

For me and see us Jazzima, Nambia plus Nakiah dog

I really miss ya

And it aint all that cool livin' off pictures

Aww, can't visit in my sleep, write a note or call

Can't believe u left me to be a small man

But I knew it wasn't meant to be

That's why I sucked up all the game that you said to me.

-Brandon

From The Beat: Man we're sorry to hear about your grandma. We understand your grandma meant a lot to you. But she's smiling down on you right now. What do you think your grandma would say to you if she found out you were in there? Make her proud and get out of this system. You don't wanna live in here no more? Get out and enjoy life. It's too short to be sad, beefing or be locked up in a small room.

What Is Freedom

To me freedom is not being in here.

Free is when you could just go out side without nobody on yo' back. Freedom is when you can have fun in kick it with the squad,

play ball, mess with girls and shhh like that.

Freedom is when you can sleep-in on the weekends and not getting up until you felt like it to eat or wash up.

So as I said before the hall is not the place to be if you plan on being free.

Free is what I'm gonna be when I get out.

-J Baby

From The Beat: You right freedom is being able to do what you want to do without anybody telling you anything. But how valuable is your freedom that you're willing to risk it? You can play ball, kick it with yo' squad, mess with girls, nobody ain't telling you, you can't do that. Just don't be breaking the law and you won't find yourself here anymore.

Loyalty To The Woman Of My Dreams

Loyalty means a lot to me.

The woman of my dreams (Vanda), has my heart. She has my love, my loyalty, and everything that falls under that tree. She is the love of my life... I will do any and everything in my will for her. Staying true to my girl means everything to me. She is like my heart and soul and everything I stand for. Letting my girl down by cheating is basically like letting myself down. And letting myself down is not something that I do. I really can't see myself cheating on my girl or doing anything unloyal to hurt her heart. So whenever I am out and about to do something that wouldn't seem loyal to my girl, I would not do it. I will just stay away because I want to stay loyal.

-Stewy

From The Beat: Of course, one of the most terrible things you can do to a person who loves you is deprive her of your company (i.e. get locked up and taken away from her). So that means that if you love this girl, you will treat yourself with dignity as well... you won't betray yourself by doing things that might deprive you of your freedom. Will that be on your mind next time you're tempted to do some sort of dirt?

Stay Out Of Jail

What's up with The Beat? What's up with all the homies?

I just tell all to stay out of jail 'cause this is not a good place to be. Man the only people that will be there for you is your family.

To all, you might think this is dumb, but always believe in God. He will always be there for you no matter what.

Do your time and stay out, so you could have fun on the outs.

To all ya that are in the hell cell man think of changing your life to a better life. Man don't come back to jail it is not a good place to be. The place to be is at your house.

Well that's all I got for The Beat but this is your boy Jose from Oakland.

-Jose

From The Beat: Man, you're exactly right. When you're locked up you don't have that many friends anymore. We can tell you from experience. How many of your homies that are locked up in the Penitentiary get visits, or money put on their books. If you check their receipts it's either from their family or their wives, girls, or whatever. Friends come and go but family is there for life whether you like it or not.

Doin' Good To Bad

My time at camp has been bad lately, because I been messing up. First I started getting write-ups, then I got into a fight.

Just because I was mad about my home visit and I think about how I didn't even go home for that and right now because of that, I'm going on a whole bunch of day passes, when I'm supposed to have overnights. But I'm starting to get my program straight and go home.

-Jh

From The Beat: Lockdown has all sorts of stress, especially when so many people are packed together, and they all have stresses of their own. We hope you stay strong and keep working on your program, so you can get home sooner and more often.

Doing My Time With The Beat Within Me

Life is like a river.

Take small steps or the current will pull you under.

The journey of life is like climbing a mountain.

-Ryan

From The Beat: That's a pretty good analogy on life. Climbing a mountain is not easy. Just like life isn't easy. But we hope you're taking your time in your journey in life and not moving too fast. Be responsible and do everything with caution. Enjoy!

Big Changes

Aye, what up wit' it Beat! It's your boy Looney once again. I finally got another home pass. It felt really good to see mi familia. My lil' sister's birthday is soon and we're gonna celebrate it on this Saturday, so that way I could be there. I didn't see my baby mama, though, but hopefully I'll see her this weekend at my sister's party.

If she comes then we can talk about things, because I really haven't told her anything about why I'm feeling the way I've been. I miss her a lot and I love with her with my heart and then some. Well, my son's almost here, and the doctors gave the baby about a week and a half or maybe two. So I'm juiced about that.

Well Beat, I'm gonna close this up. Later.

-Looney

From The Beat: It's a trip the way time flies - by the time this piece is published, your baby will be here. A new life, a new responsibility, a new role for you to play - as a young father. We are looking forward to hearing how this changes you, inside and out.

Real

Loyalty is a must.

Solid ninjas in your squad who you can trust.

People who got your back whenever guns bust.

-Wayne

From The Beat: Cops at you yelling: "Get down" puttin' you in Cuffs/ Stuck up in Juvl on some blind mans bluff? Could of did something else, but nah, he had to "act" tough? Judge don't think 15 to 25 is enough! WAKE UP- WAKE UP- WAKE THE HELL UP!

Hopefully...

What's up Beat!

This is young Capy from Oakland. Well I'm still at camp, thuggin' it out with the homies. Well I'm looking forward to this weekend because I'll probably go home for a 12 hour day pass. The last time I was on the outs was when I ran from camp, and that was four months ago, so hopefully I can go home so I can kick it with my pops and my hood family. Because I haven't seen them in a coo' minute.

I'm just gonna kick back for this weekend and not do no "hot" shhh out there. But when I get my overnights I'm gonna be hella on one, kickin' on the block.

And hopefully I won't get caught up and go to the pen, because I'm already 18 years old... so I got to be smart about my shhh and do it smart. Well I should get out by early May. So that's cool, I've been here since August 7, and I'm tired of camp. Well beat I'm out.

-Li'l Capy

From The Beat: What would you think if we told you that we are not looking forward to the day you get out? Would that seem disloyal? But we're not - because at least in camp you stay safe. Out there, like you say, your plan is to go back to the same losing battle with the streets that has already taken so many of your loved ones. Is that what your pops wants for you? Is that, deep down, what YOU want for you? Put it another way, is this a life you want, or a life you think you can't escape. Because we see a light in you - like deep down, you KNOW that this isn't how you want to go. So ask yourself this question, whether you choose to write on it or not. What would you do with your life if you DID have a choice?

Just A Thought Or Two

What's good Beat? It's me again Sticky Paper. To keep it solid I don't want to change. I'm my own man. I don't get pimped by nobody in any situation. Not by the law, my potnas, females, the police nobody. I do the pimping in my life so cant nobody tell me shhh! Because money is my motivation.

I don't see what's wrong with a woman selling her body if that's what she wanna do to make her money. Actually I feel that anybody doing anything for free needs to get beat up. It's a calling for some women out there.

All you gotta do is open your eyes. Stop watching the news and look at the streets 'cause that's were it's at!

I know females that be having sex to get what they want out of life. If that's not a positive I don't know what is. So basically what I'm saying is if you want something you should be able to have sex to get it without going to jail. So all you pimps, prostitutes and undercovers keep doing what you do. I'm out vamoose.

-Sticky Paper

From The Beat: How would you feel if your mama had sex for a living huh? How would you feel if your sister had sex for a living? How would you like your mom or sister getting beat up by a pimp? Huh? Shhh, you can talk all that shh, you talking, but you aint gonna see it from another point of view unless it's your mama or your sister catching diseases, or getting killed, or getting hurt. Open your eyes! Everyone is intitled to do what they want to do, but don't be tryin' to sell a fake dream to anybody. You make it sound so simple but you don't talk about the bad side of having sex for money, or this negative lifestyle of pain and hardship.

My Feelings

I feel this shhh is bull shhh. They got us messed up. They put us on lockdown for shhh. The white man take us to jail 'cause all we is trying to do is get money so we can eat. And stay up, you feel me? All people do is put a ninja down for nothing. You think we like doing this shh? Hell naw! Ninjas get killed everyday in the town. This shhh ain't cool. All this shhh is like a war zone.

-Pissed Off

From The Beat: There's hell a other ways to get money and you know it. We don't know about you, but we'd rather be broke than risk our lives over a dollar. Why can't you just get a job or something? Or sell things that aren't illegal. Especially in the Town there's plenty of ways to make honest money without having foo's trying to kill you or the five-o trying to arrest you. Is it 'cause that fast money is so good? What's stopping you? Get right!

My Life

I think that my life is worth fighting for because I have a family that I love and that loves me and they give nothing but love and support. They have proven that to me while I'm in here and outside of here. That's something that motivates me to keep living everyday. I love my family that helps me fight to see another day. Not only that but it makes me wanna spend as much time in this world until the day I have to leave this world.

-Teddy

From The Beat: That's great that you have a family that loves you and supports you no matter what. You're a real lucky dude. Take advantage of that. Spend as much time as you can with your family. That's all you got. We all don't live forever so make the most of your time here in this life.

Getting In Trouble

Cousin looks out for me
Cause ninjas wanting my head now
Sticky be going bad
Ninjas wanting me dead now
I need a couple thangs
My gun and a tray pound
Grew up po'
But look boy I'm paid now
Used to be scared of thangs
Grew up I'm bulky wit' cane now
Sorry I'm messin' up mama
I hope you not ashamed now
I'm always in some trouble
So you feeling some pain now

-Sticky Paper

From The Beat: Why do you like to put your life in danger? Don't you want to live? Why do you want to live life with ninjas wanting your head? Just for a few dollars? You can't find some other way to live? You don't care about how your mama feels?

Love Heart Broke

Feeling high
So I let out a sigh
Flying high above
Just like a dove
It's the feeling of love
I ask her if she likes me
And she says no
So don't you see nobody likes me
I've been stung by Cupid's bow

-Kyle

From The Beat: Out of the six-billion-plus people on the planet, a little over half are female... take that arrow out and try, try again.

What I Would Do

If this happen to someone I love. I would get very mad and find the person that killed. Murdered my friend/family member and beat them down. And feeling wise, I would most likely be mad, angry, and/or sad. RIP Catherine, my Mom.

-Joseph

From The Beat: We can understand your anger and frustration but what do you plan on accomplishing by beating down the next man? You're just gonna get yourself locked up for long time? Every dog has their day you don't have to run around and hold court on the streets and put your freedom or your life in danger.

Yeah, My Life is Worth Fighting For!

What kind of question is that? Yeah, my life is worth fightin' for! I got too much to lose if I die young.

I got my football career, my rap career, my family, girlfriend, my potnas, the people who love me. Even though I thug I still got morals that I stand for. I'm very smart, I just made some bad mistakes in my life, but that don't mean I can't change my life around and become somethin'

-Lil' T the Freestyle King

From The Beat: We believe you have morals and we know you made mistakes. We also know that you have a choice now. You can stop making them and fight for what you value in your future, or you can go back to "thuggin'" and make more mistakes. So which is it going to be?

...Or Die Trying

The people I've always been loyal to are my homies. I will always be loyal to my ninjas, because in the end when I need somethin' from them they always come through and never turn their back on me. If it's money, drugs, guns, or just simple back-up, they always got me. Just like I'll always back them up. See my ninjas is ride or die. Just like I'll ride for them. Or die trying. Sure, the things we do aren't positive... but it's either me or my homies or whoever whenever. 'Cause I'd rather do something to you before you do something to me. And that's how it will always be.

-Boxer

From The Beat: So we called this piece "or die trying" because all of the young men and women who have died trying to live this death you and your boys have got trapped in. Is that what you were given your life for? Is this truly your purpose for your short time on this planet... to think of loyalty in terms of money, guns, "back-up"? Yes, we know you were born into a lot of this... but you also chose a lot of it too ... and it's not too late to choose your way out.

If You Ain't Loyal, You Ain't Real

To me loyalty is real important
All my ninjas I hang with is loyal to each other
If you ain't loyal you ain't real
Ask any of my ninjas "am I loyal," they gon' tell you yes,
I'll die for any of my ninjas
That's how I prove my loyalty
Like for example if I was on the block
And 5-0 hit and I seen where my ninja threw his bundle
I wouldn't take his bundle or his money
That's how solid I am, just ask about me
I stay solid, that's just what I am.

-Lil' T The Freestyle King

From The Beat: That's all good, but what about when street loyalty gets in the way of being loyal to your football team (by not doing something that can get you taken off the team) or loyalty to your family (by not hurting them and ending up in jail) or loyalty to YOURSELF - meaning never putting the soul and body God gave you in danger? What do you do when all those loyalties come into conflict with each other?

Walkin' Away

Walkin' away is something I can't do
'Cause if you say screw me, I'm gonna say screw you!
That's the way I am, and that's the way it's gon' be
The boy got gas even right for The Beat
And curse words and I'm still gon' gas
Posted in the town wit' a pocket full of cash ...

-Lil' T The Freestyle King...

From The Beat: We had to cut this piece in half, Lil T... and you know why. So next time, remember it's not just the curses you say but the ideas you represent!

Loyalty is a Patna or A Female Who Got Your Back

What's up, Beat Within? This is Lil BJ reporting from Camp Sweeney. I been here for five months and I'm getting out in May.

I am writing about loyalty. Loyalty to me is a patna who has got yo' back no matter what, ready to kill someone for you, ready to help fight, or just not snitch when y'all get in trouble. Loyalty could be a female, a ride or de female who gon' stick wit' you no matter what. I got loyal ninjas that I'm loyal to.

-Lil' BJ

From The Beat: That's one kind of loyalty, but what about the loyalty of your family, the ones who love you so much that they would do anything to keep you from messing up, getting yourself down the wrong path? Does that loyalty count to you? Do you have family who would do that for you, who would risk everything just to steer you straight?

Home Visit Feels Like Freedom

What's up wit' it Beat? This is Lil' P at camp and I wish I was free, and never come back to this place again. Why? Because they always write you up for nothing, and want to take some hours away.

That shhh ain't cool, they always want to be right when they know they worry. But when I go home on my overnight I feel like I'm free, 'cause you on the outs, wearing your own shoes, eating all you want to, shower when you want to. Up here, you eat by that time like in the Hall, shower is the same wait - and that's how I feel. Free me.

-Lil' P

From The Beat: Everything tastes better with freedom, it's how humans were born to be. Do you think being at camp has helped you value freedom to the point when you will find positive goals in your life? If so, what are they?

A Day in The Life

What's up Beat, this is whisper, just writing to tell you a story of the my days on the street. My day happens almost the same every day. First I would wake up, go outside and spark a blunt. Then I would go back inside, get ready to go to school.

I'll leave my house and meet up with my homies. I'll go buy a bag off one of my older homies. We all go buy swishers and go to the wall and roll it and burn it. I'll go to school to lunch, eat and go burn another blunt. I would probably buy some 40 oz's off the liquor store. We'll go drink and chop it up for a while.

-Young Whisper

From The Beat: We're looking forward to hearing the second half of this "day in the life," because we're curious to find out. Does it make you happy? Yeah, sure it's "fun," but do you ever think, man, there must be more to life than this? And wonder what it would be like to have something to look forward to - a dream?

Life is Worth Fighting For, Unless....

What's up Beat? It's yo' homeboy dopey from Hayward. I'm up here at camp Sweeney. I personally think all life is worth fighting for unless... if you're a dope fiend or a crack head, because they choose to mess up their lives with dope and crass. Personally I think they waste a lot of treatment and rehab, because whey you gonna try to get better when you the one who messed up they life?

I know people who do meth, and I've seen where they started and then I've seen where they ended up. Their personality changes, the way they care about themselves, such as the way they dress, smell, talk, think, they a whole different person than they were in the beginning, before they started the death trap drug.

-Dopey

From The Beat: Meth is one of the most instantly addictive drugs on the planet, and plus even when you quit it can take years to get it out of your brain chemistry. Knowing this, seeing it first hand, why do you think people do it. Also, what do you think of people that make it or sell it... making money off of the kind of soul-crushing habits it makes?

Is My Life a Life Worth Fighting For?

Of course it's worth it because I love my life. I mean if I got to fight for my life, I will because everyone's life is worth it, it's priceless.

-Priceless

From The Beat: Fighting for one's life means fighting the urge to go back to the "block" and fighting that peer pressure from the homies to smoke or pop that pill or drink that drank or hit that lick or whatever! Have you made that mistake, and before, and if so, how are you going to fight for your life, for real?

My Life

Getting money

My life

Forget a bunny

My life

I ain't gotta prove nothing

My life

Life to short

My life

But it's hard to stop doing dirt

My life

I stay runnin' from the cops

Drugs

Fake friends

Fools hatin'

Ninjas playin' -stop

My life

-Sunshyne

From The Beat: Your life sounds hard. You spoke of running away from a lot of "stuff" but where are you running to? Or are you just... running? We want to hear from you.

Loyal For Ten Years!

Me and my best friend have been loyal to each other since 10 years ago! We're always loyal to each other, never lie to each other, always share secrets.

We've been through thick and thin. Every secret we got we always tell each other. Every time we're separated we always get back together and tell each other how our day went.

-Linda

From The Beat: Good friends are hard to come by these days. It's good that at least you have someone you can trust with the thoughts of your heart. Will she be out when you get out?

A Poem

Freedom let it ring
From the highs of the mountains.
Shall we all sing?
We might be chained down with whelps on our backs
But with the courage of our hearts
...we will change all
that.

-Jordan

From The Beat: This is an extraordinary poem, Jordan. Now give us one about the voice you will bring to the song, about how you, personally, intend to become a part of that change.

I Am

Sunshyne is my name
Cause I shine
You say you get active
But I'm the captain of get active.
Getting money is my goal.
I keep my head up
'Cause life's too short.
Hell yea I need a new port.
I'm on line stuck like chuck
Outta luck

-Sunshyne

From The Beat: We see you have skills but it seems like your surroundings are kind of taking you off focus at times. Huh? Keep your head up and clear your mind of the secondary stuff. Your surroundings will change at some point... think about that while you're writing.

Loyal To My Soil

Loyalty. I'm loyal to the block... I bleed it all day, every day getting dough. At the same time I'm loyal to my ninjas cause I'm a real ninja; but real ninjas are loyal because they faithful to the block and their ninjas.

If you got real ninjas, they're your family and make things happen at any moment. Man I'm going to keep it real, I'm attached to my ninjas 'cause that's just me. Man, I'm loyal to my soil because where I grew that's where my roots gon' be and it's gon' stay on my block ...loyal.

I'm loyal to money 'cause it's all I want and hella girls you feel me? But I'm about to go, but loyalty is in my blood.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: It's true that most people feel that strong connection to the people they grew up with and the neighborhood they grew up in. That's what we've gathered from most of the people who wrote about Loyalty. Why's it so difficult to just say exactly "that" without all the negative stuff you guys know we have to edit out? And especially, why does it seem like for so many of us, loving our own block has to mean hating on other blocks?

It's Better

It's better to just turn around and walk way.

In this case at least: There was this one time that I was finna drop my girl. I was twisted, and she kept on complainin' so I got really pissed off, and started to tell her hella shhh. When I just snapped and started to pull her, and hold her arm till it turned purple. She started to cry, and that's when I just decided to walk away.

-Boxer

From The Beat: Man, that must have been a horrible experience - for you and for her. There's nothing worse than violence between two people that care about each other. When you look back at it, where did all your rage come from? Was it the stuff she was saying, the way you felt inside at the time? Do people in your family do each other like that? Did you and your girl ever talk about the moment later? We are glad for both of you that you did walk away - before it got worse.

A Poet's Heart

Age is nothing but some digits ninja, trust me on this
But I think I speak for everyone when I say life is a
bummer

I'm riding' with a gun, knife with a clip
Sittin' in the bed thinking about how life is a trip
Behind diapers and shhh life is a hit

Drink Henney without the ice when I'm pissed.
Go to the parties, start a fight, thinking I'm Tyson and
shhh.

Ain't a grown man but I'm able to handle my situations
correctly.

I know I might be young but a ninja gon' definitely
respect me.

But in the meanwhile I'm a fight gun charges in court
And in a couple of weeks my next tour about to start.

-Tevin

From The Beat: Calling it a 'tour' is exactly right... because yes it's a war. But you're a poet as much as a soldier, and being a soldier means nothing unless the poet in you knows what you're fighting for. What are you fighting for? Your future, your people, your children? Your right to a life without fear? Are you fighting for something worthwhile? And good god

Turn My Wrongs to Right

Yeah, I think it really does matter when it comes to my
life. Life is about decisions and choices ... and every day
I'm trying to turn my wrongs to right.

I continue to strive every day because of my family
and friends and I'm there for them and I know they're
always there for me.

-Lucky

From The Beat: What does it mean to be "there" for them? What is the most important way that you've been there for someone, and most important way that someone has been there for you, in the past six months?

Youngin'

If he disrespect me, his whole career as a rapper is
what I cost him, My flow is way out of this world call me
a martian

My ice is steady flossin' the flow is colder than August,
And forget them 'cause they then lost it,

I got to get that money boy and I don't think its funny
boy,

Unless I'm in a track met you'll never see me running
boy,

This ain't the Bronx Tale, but I fell like Sonny Boy,
And you know I just rap like it's Christmas and I'm a toy,
Different than you and yours, we opening Porsche doors
And you still pushin' scrapers come on now I can take
ya',

You ninjas ain't seein' paper but I don't want to hurt ya,
But you know I keep the hammer like I'm a construction
worker,

Or carpenter or something I know that these dudes is
frontin',

And my pockets stay big like a pregnant woman's
stomach,

I roll blunts like its nothing and blow them like a
trumpet

I do not trust myself... so don't ask me what trust is
....OK I'm finished bustin'.

-Kwamaine

From The Beat: Now that you're finished bustin' brilliantly, we'd add, that you do rap like it's Christmas, which is, by the way, a holiday of peace and hope, right? Which means, can you take this talent and use it to light the way, for you in your life, for us as your readers?

Loyalty

Loyalty is key... My ninjas is loyal, and I'm loyal to my ninjas. My ninjas are my blood... I tried the potna thang, but it didn't work out, he snitched on me to get himself out...Damn, no that's scandalous...that's why I only mess with my family... I tried being loyal to my female too... but that was too hard for me...

Where I'm from, loyalty is key.

-June

From The Beat: You ever hear the expression "A true friend will not lead a friend into danger?" True loyalty is not just the person who GETS you out of trouble. It's the one who keeps you out of trouble.

Lockdown

The loyalty I have in my life comes from wife who is waiting for me to come home, lalala.

The loyalty that I'm surrounded by is the love I get from my family...no lie, it ain't gon' die.

This ain't no library -- if it was we wouldn't be lockdown going in our bedroom thinking about the 'Town.

-Proctor

From The Beat: It's no library, but if you use it as a library (a quiet place to read and gain knowledge and respect for learning), lockdown could turn out to be a blessing in disguise!

Worth Fighting For, Because I Still Got A Lot to Learn

Yes, my life is worth fighting for because I'm still young and I still got a lot to learn. It's worth fighting for because I have family who loves me.

Another reason why my life is worth fighting for is because I have big dreams planned for my life. I have goals that I want to get to and accomplish.

I take it very serious when someone threatens me or something...I take it very personal. So if somebody ask me is my life worth fighting for I would ask them is they mama worth fighting for.

-Ricky

From The Beat: Good point. There are so many ways to fight for your life, or your mama for that matter. Think about it this way. Let's say someone insulted your mama, and you went off on that person. Then you went to jail. But what your mama DOESN'T want is you in jail. She'd rather you not fight for her with physical strength, she'd rather you just walk away, using your mental strength to make a smart decision. So what kind of a mental fight do YOU fight for your life?

Loyalty: The Number One Word

I am loyal to my friends and family because they are loyal to me. In the streets loyalty is the number one word... people who are not loyal or in other words snitches end up being killed. If there is no loyalty in a friendship, family or relationship then there is no friendship, family, or relationship.

Staying true to friends means having their back no matter what goes down.

Staying true to your girl friend means not cheating.

And staying true to your family means loving them no matter what and having their back. But always put family first. My momma is most loyal to me.

-Teddy

From The Beat: What kinds of things has your mom done to show you her loyalty to you? And what is the most loyal thing you personally have ever done, for her or for anyone else?

What You Wanna Do?

I'm sitting in my cell.

Thinking of never land,
wondering am I going to make it
or come back again

I'm 17 years old,

just a young black man,
tryna accomplish my dreams
but have no plan,

a man with no plan has a plan to fail

I just think about it when I'm sittin' in that cell.

You got kids, a family, people who care about you
in the streets all day with ninjas who ain't got yo' back

and when you give them something

they figure they don't have to give it back.

So when you in that cell yo' ass better kick back
and think of a plan on how you not gon' come back.

(My plan is to get a job)

-The General

From The Beat: This is a great poem. But there's gotta be more than just "get a job" as your plan. What job? Where? There are some patnas you will need to cut off, you know that already, right? And then there's places you'll have to avoid. You'll have to miss some parties too, and functions. You'll have to start going to school and think hard about what you want in the future, not just in 2008 but 2028. You need a dream, a goal, a prize to hold your eyes. So next poem, show us you deserve to be called a General, and lead us into your proud future.

Most Definitely....

Most definitely my life is worth fighting for. First of all, I'm still a young man that have a lot to live for, things to see and places to be. I got a big family that loves me, and I love them too.

I hate disappointing my mother and little brother, because they depend on me the most. I also want to fight for my life because I ain't ready to go, 'cause there are a lot of things in store for me in life and I'm looking forward to seeing the good things over the bad.

I'm fighting to stack enough money for the future so when I get a job I could just add to the stuff I already have, so it won't be that much stuff I want in life. And also when I get right, get a big house and have some kids. I want to buy some nice exotic cars and put rims and paint all over them. I also want my house to have a theme park in the back yard with an indoor swimming pool, and an indoor gym, that's why I will fight for my life.

-Baby T

From The Beat: You deserve all the things you describe in this piece, and then some. So now that you tell us you are willing to fight for them, tell us how you will need to. What are the obstacles? What will get in your way? Who are the people who can help you in this fight?

My Life is Worth Boxing For

See personally I eat, sleep, shhh and breathe the life of a hustler. If I gotta go and get it, I'm gon' run towards it. I get money and I go hard because anything else is irrelevant. Period point blank.

Yeah, my life worth is worth fighting for, and I'm wearing my boxing gloves, but I don't have nothing to prove. It ain't no competition out here for me because these cats can't do what I've done already everyday all day I'm in the boxing ring...but I love the arena, because my biggest opponent is myself.

-Fat Tae

From The Beat: It's good to hear you have determination and strength, but when you get your money off other people's pain, that pain turns on you. Over and over again. In the end, who eats? The cemetery and the system.

Do What You Gotta Do

What's up with The Beat? This yo' boy Davey-D up in here. Man, we up in here holding it down for the 'hood. But I'ma tell y'all something. When you been in here for a long amount of time, then you would know what I'm talking 'bout. To all in the facility, keep y'all head up and do what y'all gotta do to make it.

-Davey-D

From The Beat: What can we learn from this? Almost nothing! The only thing anyone reading this can learn is that you're locked up, a prisoner of the system "doing what you gotta do," whatever that is. This shows almost no thinking at all... which may be one reason why you're here!

Worrying About My Brother

What's good with The Beat? This that young ninja D-Swoop, and I wanted to talk about my brother.

Man, I swear to god I hope my bra get out soon, but he might not because they tryin' to get him for murder. Man, that's really my brother for real. We used to do everything together. But when we get out we go keep it lit. I love you lil' bra. Keep yo' head up.

-D-Swoop

From The Beat: If you love this lil' bra, then you have to keep him away from anything that might lead to murder or a charge of murder. If not, you won't have any chance to "keep it lit" together.

Feelings

I have this one person that I am getting to have feeling for, but the person is in a higher place than I am. So if this person even know how I felt about her, she will be shocked, 'cause she would never think that I will feel for her, but I do. An' it's real hard to tell her I have this feelings, so what should I do to tell her I have this feelings?

-Da Man

From The Beat: We're not sure who this lady is, given you do not give us enough details. For example, is she close to your age? Is she way older? Does she live in your community? Is she already married? Does she know you, or has no idea you exist? More info, before we can offer any advice.

If I Just Got At That One Girl

Man, that girl was very beautiful
With that long hair
That beautiful skin that's like silk
When the sun hit it

If I just got at that one girl?
Why did she not stop when I said "hi" to her?
Why didn't she turn around for me?
'Cause she was with her man

-Marko

From The Beat: She was showing respect and loyalty to her man we suppose. From your poem it sounds harmless, but hey people respond differently. We are all different.

My Souljas

What' 'sup with The Beat? Yeah, I wanna tell y'all 'bout my souljas. My goons up in here holdin' shhhh down right now, you dig? Me, I'm doin' my thang, you feel me? But my ninjas, they my ninjas fo' real, fo' real, an' they loyal too.

That's all right now dough, but I love my souljas. I'm out.

-Lil' Canon

From The Beat: You should know by now that you cannot use The Beat to communicate with anyone in another unit, so we had to take out a couple of sentences. This piece says almost nothing at all. We know you have more in your head than this, so why not share a little of it.

To Hell With The System...

Ninja... To hell with the system. I lost my homies into the system and I'm here with the. Hell, guess what.... The system could screw us hard, but I'm screw them ten times harder...

So Beat, I'm gonna be pissed if you don't put my writing in this rag, 'cause it feel like you part of the punk-ass system. So yea, screw the system! And bras, keep yo' head up. Love y'all.

-Ulala

From The Beat: With so much hate, where do you find that "love" you ended this piece with? The Beat is NOT a part of the system, whatever you feel about it. The sad thing is that you are a part of the system, and however much you might want to take your revenge on it, all you can manage to do is screw yourself deeper and deeper into a hole of your own making. If the system is as "punk-ass" as you believe it to be, then why keep doing the things that put you into it?

Been Going From Home

What's good with The Beat? It's ya boy, J. Thizzle, up here at the Ranch. But, yeah, I been gone for almost fifteen months—that's a long time, but I am going to be home in a few weeks. But when I get closer, it gets slower. I hate that. But when I do get out, it's go' be popping and that's my word. But, yeah, it's nothing.

-Jt

From The Beat: Good observation—the closer to get to your goal, the slower time gets and the more anguishing each day can seem to you, with your freedom so close, but yet, so far. Hope when you are free it's popping in a positive productive way

I'm Gonna Vote For Barack Obama

I'm gonna vote for Barack Obama 'cause I think he would make a good president because he black and he might make some big changes in the community and in the world.

I'd like to see him get better schools for the kids, better parks, better after-school programs. I'd like to see him get some more positive black people like Oprah into office, and Bill Clinton, because he's black at heart.

I feel that Mr. Barack Obama, if he gets elected president, he will get assassinated within his first two years. I mean, that's just a feelin' I have because we haven't had a black president for the Constitution before, because we had Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and other black leaders and they were killed, also.

But if Hillary (Clinton) becomes president and brings in Obama as vice president, Obama wouldn't get assassinated, but if Obama is president and he bring Hillary in as vice president, I feel Hillary would get Obama assassinated so she could move up and be president.

They both have somewhat the same goals that they want for America. They want less war, more money spent on schools and better health care. But they tryna raise taxes on gas and everything gonna fall apart because we owe too much money because of the wars and why is they givin' food to the Iraqians because we got homeless people that are hungry, too. But these are not issues that are starting to occur, but they're past issues that are gettin' worse by the day.

This article ain't gonna change nothing, but I'm just speakin' my mind.

-Tha Dude

From The Beat: There are all kinds of people, including political experts, who are beginning to talk about the possibility that somebody racist might threaten or murder Barack Obama, should he be elected President of the USA, simply because he is black. Do you think that if your theory even has a remote possibility of becoming true, that you shouldn't vote for Barack if you were old enough to vote, because you wouldn't want him to die, or would you vote for him anyway, because you believe he'd be such a terrific President, and it would be worth the risk?

Just Keepin' It Pushin'

One of the worst things I think of I eva walked away from was my first love. I know some people could tell you that I don't know what love is, but I do.

Why did I walk away, you ask. 'Cause I got scared of someone actually carin' for me. Stupid, huh? Now that I look back, I know I made a mistake. You know, I was told that half the time ducks get locked up, if they were with their girls it wouldn't eva had happened.

I regret leaving her. She kept me out of trouble, kept my head straight. I still remember the last thing I told her, "I'ma just keep it pushing."

-Squiks

From The Beat: We don't think it's stupid at all that you walked away from someone because their love scared you. In fact, we admire your honesty and your courage for examining the reasons you walked away. Maybe you didn't think you were worthy of that kind of caring because you didn't care for yourself as much as she cared for you. We don't know what you meant by what you told her, but we hope you look carefully into your own heart and begin loving the person that you are.

Loyalty Must Be Earned

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Mike. I'm 'bout to write about this topic, man. Loyalty is a must. I'm loyal to my family and my ninjas. I'll always be there for the ones I love.

Ninjas that not loyal need to get the hell out the streets. I'ma always be there for my ninjas. If my family or my ninjas need me, I'ma be there even if I gotta travel through hell, sleet, and snow. I trust them to do the same thing.

Loyalty is not a thang that's just being handed out. You have to earn yo' shhh. You have to really watch who you give it to 'cause some ninjas are snakes. They'll snitch on yo' ass in the quickness.

Me and my ninjas go' always be loyal to each other. That's how its gotta be if you want to mess with me.

-Mike

From The Beat: You say you're going to always be there for your family, but where are you now? Don't you think they need you? How can you be there for them if you're here? You can travel through hell, sleet and snow, but you can't travel through steel doors and thick walls. You're right, loyalty is not just handed out, but it's also not just words. (R.S. The Beat doesn't want to promote the message in the Beat name you chose, so we're asking you to choose a different one.)

Current Event:

My cousin, people was hating on him, 'cause he want to be a boy. But it really don't matter what he wanna be. My whole school, Francisco Middle School, jump him just because he wanted to be a boy, and that really hurted me, 'cause he and me are close as ever. That's my rider. You either go' ride or die or die trying.

I just wonder why they so busy concentrating on him and what he want to be, instead of they business and minding their own.

-Caprice

From The Beat: We had to take out your cousin's name, Caprice, because it's not fair to identify him without permission. If the problem you're addressing is that he was born a girl but wants to be a boy, then we agree with you 100%. That's his business and nobody else's. We think people who are outside the "sexual norms" that we're all taught when we're very small somehow "threaten" others just for being who they are. Some people are so insecure in their own identities that they feel justified in attacking the "other" — like what happened at your middle school. So we're proud of you for knowing what's important and what's not, and for loving your cousin however he identifies himself. If you and he don't already know about it, there is a wonderful place in San Francisco for people facing the problems your cousin is facing, and where he can meet others that have gone through what he is going through. It's called The Center, and it's at 1800 Market Street, (865-5555).

Life Worth Fighting For

Hell yeah, my life is worth fighting for 'cause I've been in dangerous situations before, and my life has been almost taken from me twice. I could have givin' up and died, but I pulled through all right and did the same shhh that got me hit. But yeah, my life is worth fighting for.

-Bigg E

From The Beat: We see a big contradiction in what you wrote and what you did. If your life is worth fighting for (which you proved by pulling through two near-death experiences), then why would you risk it all again by doing the same thing as before (and being foolish enough to expect a different result)? If you put yourself in those dangerous situations, then how much are valuing your life? How many chances do you think you get?

Loyalty To My Ninjas

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Na-Na writing bout loyalty. Yeah, me, I'm loyal to my ninjas fo' real. Man, I would never shake one of my ninjas because I know they wouldn't snake me 'cause I'm loyal to my block. I ride with my ninjas 'til the wheels fall off.

And for the ninjas that know me, know I do my thang and I stay loyal to the dead homies. But when I touchdown, I'm gone still be loyal to my ninjas, an' I'm gone stay loyal to the block. I'm out Beat. My words are getting short.

-Na-Na

From The Beat: So, you're loyal to an inanimate object, a piece of real estate that has no soul, no heart and no head, and couldn't be loyal to anything. If you keep your promise to go back to the block when you touchdown, how much more time are you willing to give up to those who now control your life? Six months? Six years? Sixty years? When will you begin to value your own individuality, your own uniqueness? We hope that comes before you give it all away.

Loyalty

Loyalty! My heart belongs to a boy named Stephaune. He's my life. We been through a lot. We been to hell and back. I'm down for whatever, for mines. I ain't never cheated on my man and he ain't never cheated on me, no how. How I know? 'Cause I do love my boy and he love me, too. Dude's 100% loyal, all day, every day.

-Caprice

From The Beat: We're glad you've found the boy of your dreams. Now, how can you change some things in your life so that you aren't having to write about your love from behind four walls, but instead are able to be with him forever?

Loyalty Is More Than A Word

Loyalty is a strong word. Matter of fact, it's a lot more than a word. Don't say your loyal, 'cause if you're really loyal, it will show in your actions. If you try to be loyal to someone who ain't loyal to you, then you're just stupid and you won't get nowhere in life.

If you're going to do something for someone, they should be willing to do something for you with no problem. If the ones you kick it with ain't loyal to you, then you need to find some loyal homies, 'cause if something bad happens to you and your homies ain't loyal, then they won't feel sorrow. Which means there will be no revenge.

I know I'm loyal for mine and they feel the same for me.

-Mongo

From The Beat: What about being loyal to yourself, Mongo? By that we mean valuing your own identity and unique qualities enough to want to stay free and in control of your life. (Now, strangers in a cold system control your life, because YOU gave them the power to do so.) Do you believe that revenge is the only way to prove your loyalty? We don't know if you believe in God or what the Bible teaches, but in that book it is written (in Romans 12:19-21): "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." What do you think that means?

Loyalty Is A Must

What's good with The Beat? Well, this yo' boy V-Guttah still holding it down.

Well today we talking about loyalty. Loyalty is a must around me and that means if you ain't got loyalty in you, then I can't hang with you in any means. I am loyal to my family, to my ninjas and my 'jets.

To this day everybody I know have loyalty 'cause I only mess with real ninjas that's holding it down. Keep y'all heads up all times, a'ight.

-Vg

From The Beat: Do you have any loyalty to yourself and the freedom you were born with? What do you do when the loyalty you have for your family clashes with the loyalty you have for your boys? How do you choose between them? Can you be a "real ninja" and finish school, get a college education, be a leader? Or does being a "real ninja" require you to do the things that lead you into this semi-slavery?

Loyalty Is Staying True

I stay loyal to all my ninjas and to all my family. Loyalty to me is staying true to the people around you.

When I caught my case, I was with two other ninjas, but one of them wasn't loyal. The one that wasn't snitched on me and got out, while I took the wrap.

Now I got this 707 case and I'm trying to get charged as a juvenile because they trying to charge me as an adult.

-Lano

From The Beat: We hope you beat your 707 because it's clear that you were not thinking like an adult. When you caught your case, you were not being loyal to your family as an adult would be. Real loyalty requires a sense of responsibility to those that love you so that you are there for them. Instead, they must now be here for you. Sacrificing some of the things you like doing is something that every adult with children understands. You are not here because someone snitched you out, but because you gave that snitch power over your life by doing whatever it was he said you did. It's time to become the adult the system wants to say you are.

Beef

Beef is a hard thing to go through! You gotta watch yo' back twenty-four hours and you gotta stay alert at all times! Beef hurts people, families, and tear down everything about you! The only thing people think about in beef is money, power and respect!

-Goon

From The Beat: This is a thoughtful piece of writing, Goon, but we wish you added a lot more, because we know you have a lot more to say. Does that "respect" you write about come from the money and the power? If so, is it really respect? (Do you respect President Bush because he has money and power?) What are you doing to avoid the beef, if you are avoiding it. What do you want to do to avoid it in the future?

A Life Worth Fighting For

My life's worth fighting for. I got a life to live and a boyfriend to live it with. I feel everything I do is wrong, but it ain't like I'm stuck in the ghetto. I love to run the streets, but I still don't do nothing just because I ain't go' snitch on my goons and I'm not. Like I said, together forever, ride or die.

But I didn't do nothing. Even the victim said I didn't. I was just there, so I feel I don't have a reason to be here and I'm here for my birthday. Naw, bra, that ain't good. So I'ma fight for my rights on my dead homie..

-Caprice

From The Beat: If you didn't do what they charged you with, then you should fight for your rights. But you should also know that being in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people is a prescription for losing your freedom. So, unless you like it here, you should weigh your options carefully.

Not Much Loyalty Out There

Loyalty means a lot to me. It's very little loyalty out there on them streets. That's why I don't got no friends. All I have is my mom and my sisters 'cause no matter what I go through, they stay loyalty to me.

-Acie

From The Beat: How will you show them your loyalty once you're back in the free world? What changes do you have in mind for your life?

Loyalty

My sister has my whole heart, that I am loyal to her. I'm so attached and faithful to my sis, because we been through so much, and she always stick it out with me. It requires a lot, like when she don't like somebody, I can't like them, and I expect that. She encourage me by staying on me 24/7. I don't feel like I have to do anything to be loyal. My sis shows me by any time I need her, no matter what, she comes running.

-La Sara Lucy

From The Beat: You are so lucky to have a sister like this, so don't take this gift for granted. Show your loyalty by not doing the things that let the system remove you from her. That's the demonstration of true loyalty and love that she needs.

Loyalty

My sister, Mashonna, has my back 'til the end. So does my crew. I love my sister so much. Whoever I'm beefin' wit', she beefin' wit'. I jus' really love my sister.

-Game

From The Beat: It's good to have a sister you love so much, but then why do you do the things that give power to the system to take you away from her? If you want to be together as a family, then both you and your sister are going to have to find other ways than beefing to express your feelings

Loyalty

S'up wit' chu, Beat? It's ya boy from just writin' to tell y'all I'm loyal to my homies. The reason why I am loyal to my homies is 'cause they show me love and they respect me. So when my homies show me love and respect, so I give them my loyalty. They put money in my pocket and put food in my stomach, give me a place to stay. That is how they show me love and respect, so that is why I'm loyal.

I'm sittin' here writin', because I got all this time.

-Grande

From The Beat: We can appreciate what you say, Grande, which is that your homies are a kind of substitute family that's there for you. But we still have questions. Like, if going to jail is a price for your loyalty, how is that showing you respect? If you put your life or freedom in danger, then are you showing yourself love and respect? These are questions worth thinking about.

Loyalty Means Keep Yo' Mouth Shut

Loyalty means a lot where I'm from because most ninjas ain't loyal. Loyalty means a lot — keep yo' mouth shut and what goes around in the 'hood stays in the 'hood.

That's all I got for The Beat. I've been in here for like three months and my shhh still ain't been published. And for all y'all curious who BM is, it's Young Vell. Loyalty is a big word and it shouldn't be played with.

-Bm

From The Beat: We've had to change your Beat name because it's just not a message The Beat wants to broadcast. As to you stating you've never been published, we both know that's an exaggeration... You say that what goes around in the 'hood stays in the 'hood, but it's like those commercials about what happens in Las Vegas... What happens there (and in the 'hood) have long-term consequences that spill far beyond its borders.

Finally Out The Ranch

'Sup Beat? I've been writing to you guys and my shhh never, never shows up. Anyways, it's been awhile since I wrote to you guys.

I'm happy 'cause I'm not at the Ranch. I'm back at the halls doin' way better than the weak-ass Ranch, I'm 'bout to be 18 in two months. I might go home to my family, to my girl. Oh yeahhhh. If not home to my family and girl, then I'm goin' to another group home.

A group home or placement is way better than the Ranch — home passes, more outings and all the shhhh. Man, forget the Ranch. Holla back Beat.

-Eb

From The Beat: Besides more home passes and outings at group homes or placement than the Ranch, what else is so weak about it? Since you are the one who experienced being there (we are only there for one hour a week), you have to tell us with some details and examples why you hate it so much. Give us some descriptions of the place, and some reasons for your opinion that the hall is "way better." Okay?

Free Say

This is what I hear

They say they want to be in the game

But want out of the game

Being locked up is part of the game

If you didn't

You lucky

It feels good when a homie ain't lost when losing one

Think everythang gone

You must be wrong

Don't let this mind games fool you

You got to be strong

If you from the 'hood

You know what you waiting for

Me I gots mines

That's the 'hood dream

-Playboy

From The Beat: If being locked up is art of the game, is there ever a time when being locked up might be too high a price to pay for playing? Is a year more than you're willing to pay? Ten years? A lifetime? Why do we read so many letters from prison (printed in The Beat Without section) from prisoners who once thought exactly the same as you do now, but who have looked back on their choices with sorrow and remorse, and wish they could change things that are now too late to change?

Fo' Me And My Boys

I'm that young thief robbin' houses on Christmas Eve

You betta believe, I gotta achieve

Gotta survive on these streets, boy it's hard for me

I sit back in the cuts an' burn that purple leaf

Just to ease my mind, this my pain relief

I got no specialties, I'm just born to rob

I ain't got no job, boy it's just me and my squad

Yeah Beat, that's some generic shhh I just wrote fo' y'all. I couldn't write 'bout clappin' shhh, up so I just wrote that.

This yo' boy Chris. Hold that shhh down an' keep yo' head up. I love you ninjas mayne

-Lil' Canon

From The Beat: Except for the one line we had to take out of your verse (and you know which line we're talking about), we actually admire your skills, even if we can't admire how you use them on the outs. Anyone who says they were born to rob is robbing the Creator... unless you believe God creates some people to rob and others to be robbed... Our own little verse to you goes like this: If you think life is a game just for you and yo' squad/You'll end up with only men, living life in a pod/It's clear to us that you could be so much more/Than what you've "achieved" and what you've settled for/But until you open your eyes and see what you're doin'/It's your life and your future that you'll keep on screwin'!

Down

Down for mines

Put my life on they line

Up in juvie doing time

Don't know fo' what

Yep, I did they crime

With my baby on my mind

But I'm in with my click

Wannabees still get sick

Don't know what to do

Stressing like shhh

Keep getting smart

Yes, it a must

I does what I do

Like I said, forget you

I'm acting brand new

I said it once

And I say it again

Forget you and ya lover too

And ya lover

The shhh never end

Too hard on a ninja

Too hard on ya boo

I fend for green

Walking, snatchin' purses

Just doin' my thing

Next day rockin' Gucci

Frick bling-bling Ayye

-Caprice

From The Beat: We had to take so much out of this poem, it may make no sense to you any more. And we will always take out threats like those that punctuated almost every line of your original poem. If these rules of writing are not acceptable to you, then you'll have to find another publication to publish you! If allowing yourself to be taken away from all that you know and love and put in a box for strangers to tell you what to do and when to do it, then you're definition of "rockin'" and ours are completely different. We can only hope that you open your eyes to where you are — and where you're headed — before you get there.

My Husband Is The Love Of My Life

I'm loyal to my husband, Ronald. He's the love of my life.

I would give up the world to be with him. I haven't never had nobody in my life that been this good to me. I can always count on him. He takes good care of me—always makes sure I hold my head up high. He has my heart deeply, also my soul.

I will never let him go. I could always depend on him. We just loyal to each other. Hopefully we can stay loyal to each other, now that I'm in here. Well, I know he will, because I trust him. Until the day I die, I'm going to ride. Nobody could take his place. Dudes come and go—well, not this one. He'll never go nowhere.

-Meshia

From The Beat: Whether you always feel this way about Ronald or not (no one can predict the future), we hope you find a way to stop doing the things that take you from him. You say you will never let him go, but by giving away your freedom, you have let him go, at least temporarily. You have to stop doing whatever it is that led you here, and start doing the things that will allow the two of you to build a life together.

Life's Worth Fighting For

I would fight for my life because it's worth fighting for. I think you can do a lot in life even though you down. You have to come up, you know. Stay up, Beat.

-Cruz

From The Beat: You can add so much more to a piece like this, Cruz. For example, what are some of those things you can do in life, even when you're down? What does it mean to "come up" in life, and what is your plan for achieving that goal? You need to think deeper and put in greater effort because you have a lot more to say.

Learning Who's Really Loyal

What's poppin' with The Beat? It's that Meez ninja. I'm 'bout to be out this thang in six days, and I can't wait. It feels like time is movin' slow as hell, my ninja.

But I'ma say a few things about loyalty. While I been in here for the past half a year, I found out which ninjas and females really loyal to me and who got my back. By that I mean they write a ninja back, and they don't live by that sayin', "outta sight, outta mind."

To me that's loyalty, 'cause when a ninja locked down, that's the time when you show a ninja you care, 'cause people could easily forget about you. But then when you get out, they be like, "I was 'bout to write you, but I didn't have the address." Or they say some o other shhh like that.

But I can't think of no other shhh to write. But I'm out.

-Meez

From The Beat: We can understand why you would feel let down by those who make excuses for not writing to you when you're in the box. When you're out, do you write to those left inside? When you're in jail, you naturally think of yourself and wanting to connect to the outside. But when you're outside, there is so much more going on that it's sometimes hard to remember your friends locked up. We don't know if this is a true measure of loyalty or not, but we understand why it's your measurement.

Better Know What's Up

I broke bread with you ninja, showed you how I live. What's good? This T-House my ninja. But yeah, we gone.

And stay cool to all you young ninjas just coming in this shhh, 'cause y'all can get yo' kofi knocked off not knowing what's up.

-T-House

From The Beat: We can't see the connection between the first line and the last line. Who did you break bread with, and how is that related to warning newbies that they'd better know what's up. Do you know what's up? If so, what are you doing in here?

My Family

Every time I am wit' my family, we go out to eat. We go to Denny's an' we get bacon and waffles or eggs. We go to Great America and Water World. I play football wit' my family. I go shopping wit' my family.

-Quez

From The Beat: These are all fun and good things to do with your family. We're sure you miss doing them and just being together with them. So, why would you give all that up by allowing yourself to be snatched from their warmth and put into a cold box like this? If it isn't worth it, then stop doing the things that take power from you and give it to the system that is controlling you. It's up to you!

Loyalty To My Block

What it is Beat? Me, Ant, same ol' shhh.

Loyalty! I feel this topic because I'm a real-ass ninja. Me, I'm loyal to my block and 'jet, and fa' sholy my ninjas, because when I was down and out, my thugs stepped up to the plate for me. Off top, my young G's gone be there for me while I'm locked up in a box.

Just like it's some suckas out there hoping and praying that I get washed like the food trays when ninjas on crew.

Loyalty! I'm just a loyal-ass ninja.

-Anto

From The Beat: Going to war for your block... Well, it seems like that's the way the world is. You fight for a little piece of real estate that you think it's worth losing your freedom or your life for. A state fights the next state for more power and control. The country goes to war with another country for what they've got. And more and more people die. And the world continues to go to hell. Human beings are very strange animals!

Is My Life A Life Worth Fighting For

My life is worth fighting for because I was born for a reason. I'm here to be a success. I was born to get my education and live my dreams.

I'm fighting for my freedom and to be happy. I'm fighting to be with my family again. I'm fighting to get out. I'm fighting to get probation.

-Fighting For Freedom

From The Beat: We had to change your Beat name because naming yourself after an assault weapon is not acceptable. But what you've written is very acceptable, and we hope you win this struggle you're in to regain your freedom, and then never to lose it again. What are the dreams you want to see come true. How will you make that happen?

Is My Life Worth Fighting For?

Of course my life is worth fighting for. I'm already fightin' when I'm asleep. I'm not crazy. I'm fighting to wake up. I'm fightin' walkin' out the door.

Ninjas be hatin'. They say that they don't, but who really knows? But I'm already fighting to live.

-Antonio

From The Beat: We sure would like a lot more details to tell us what you mean. Why do you say you're "not crazy"? Has someone said that you are? What do you mean you're fighting to wake up? Wake up from what? How are you "fighting to live," and what are you focusing on when you do walk out that door?

This 'Hood Tragedy Starting To Take Mines

What's good with The Beat? This that young guerrilla, Chuck, holding it down at the Ranch. I been down for nine months. This shhh starting to take mines, but I'm gone' keep my head up like a big dog. I just look at it as they can't hold me down forever.

I got eight more months left an' I'm back to the block where them chops pop off. You know me, man, I'm gone run through a few 'hoods when I get out, turn that shhh into a tragedy.

-Chuck

From The Beat: It's already a tragedy that your homies are getting killed, and you have our hearts. But you "running through a few 'hoods," which sounds like you're seeking revenge, will solve nothing. More people die and you're either hurt, in prison forever, or gone yourself. Instead of creating more violence, what can you do to stop these tragedies?

I'm Bored

Every day, "aburrido" (I'm bored) in here at the Ranch. You know who is this little vato. I am aburrido in here because I do the same every day—the morning, at night, thinking at my family. All day, every day, thinking what my lil' brother's doing. I can told my brothers when I get out now is too "aburrido," but I can do nothing because I do my crime and I go' pay for it. I wanna told my homies, "Stop doing stupid shhh because I don' wanna see all my homies locked up."

So, anyways, this is the Morro, chillin'. Okay, don't worry about this lil' vato, because I am doing crazy time, like now, I feel I can do nothing, 'cause it's "aburrido" and every day it's go' be like that.

If you wanna be like me, go, nobody go' stop you, because is you' life. You go' be mess up. You' first time is nothing. Several times is when you start seeing everything.

-Lil' Morro

From The Beat: Maybe part of the reason you're bored is because you've been at the Ranch for a long time, but since you're stuck there for now, why don't you get your mind right! Read and write! Get your release plan together. Help others. They have a library, weight room, computers, basketball and baseball teams. It's not home, but, like any aspect of your life, you might as well enjoy and learn everything you can from it. You'll be home soon.

Same Answers

What's up with The Beat? Man, every time I read a Beat, the thing that y'all respond on the bottom be predictable. Y'all write the same response on everyone, Beat. Wheneva I read a Beat, I already know what y'all gone write, 'cause basically y'all be writin' the same shhh every time. I mean I could read a Beat then I already know what y'all wrote fo' the response 'cause y'all write the same shhh!

Write some different shhh next time, a'ight? I'm tired of reading y'all same-ass shhh. That's all right now, but I probably might know what y'all gone write as a response fo' this one, but I'm out.

-Lil' Canon

From The Beat: You think YOU'RE tired of reading the same responses week after week? Just think of how tired WE are of reading the same thing in your pieces, week after week. It's a two-way street, Lil' Canon. It's like we could have written the sentence that you wrote here: "... basically, y'all be writin' the same shhh every time..." If you read everything in The Beat, you will see different responses based on what the writer has written. It's like doing the same thing over and over but expecting a different result. It just doesn't work. If you keep doing the things that put you under the control of the system, you'll keep putting yourself under the control of the system. If you keep writing the same things week after week, you'll keep getting the same response. Maybe that's why it's so predictable.

Where My Life Will End Up

What it do, Beat? This ya boy, Lil' Bra, and I am in a situation that tells where my life will end up at. I ran from my group home. I was walking downtown in the dope area and the police hopped out on me and my brother. One police officer stuck a pen down my throat to see if I swallowed any dope. I didn't, but I did miss court and I did have a no-bail warrant.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: We hope this situation does not predict where your life will end up, but is just a setback in a long journey. Running from your group home is not the way to face your responsibilities, which you must face if you are to avoid more setbacks like this. Plus, why would you miss a court date? That's entirely in your power to avoid, so entirely your responsibility for missing it. This is the consequence for not accepting that responsibility.

Loyalty Doesn't Exist

Man, this yo' ninja floss man writing about this so-called loyalty. Ain't no damn loyalty in this shhh. Most ninjas just jump in this shhh head first, with no guidance at all. Then when they get caught up in some ol' otha shhh, and them peoples got yo' ass sitting down for some shhh you didn't even do, — you was just there stunt dummy — now yo' ass wanna snitch.

So, like I said, ain't no loyalty. Loyalty don't exist in my vocabulary. That shhh is way overrated.

-Fed-Up Gloss

From The Beat: How about loyalty to yourself and to your future? If you can't trust anyone else, can you trust yourself to focus on the things that will keep you free and move your life forward? If not, then what does your future hold?

Hustle And Show

It's good to hustle because you get money. It's not good to hustle because you can go to jail.

P.S For The Beat: Don't write no smartass comment back. For once, be intelligent.

-Too Raw For The Beat:

From The Beat: We'll try our best to be intelligent for once... It's not that you're "too raw for the Beat" is that you're too brief! Two sentences to explain the pros and cons of hustling can't possible tell anyone much of anything. You have time to write something more, but only if you think about it more, and get below the surface more. Do you HAVE TO hustle? Why? Why not? Is getting money worth risking going to jail? Why? Why not? (We hope this is intelligent enough for you.)

His Mom Protected Him

I heard about someone getting shot on the bus, but he did not die, when I was in the sixth grade. His mom told him to be quiet, because he know who he was with, and she did not want him to snitch, because she did not want him to die.

-Pork Chop

From The Beat: You wrote at the bottom of your piece that you "wrote anything," meaning it's really close to nothing. Next time, write something that teaches something, that tells us more, that reveals something about you and what you think, and where you want to go with your life, and how you want to get there. That's what The Beat is for!

Loyalty

I'm loyal to my Baby Mama, and my goons. I'm deeply in love with my BM and my goons who I'm gone ride fo' no matter what, you dig, dawg? Me and my ninjas been through hell and back and still livin', duckin' this sucka. I can't blame them, I'm just the Mook.

But why I'm loyal to my BM 'cause she here through the good and the bad and gone ride or die when it's time to do so. But my words short. Mook. Walk around and ask about me, you dig? Gone.

-Mook

From The Beat: You and your girl may have been to hell and back, but far too many young men have not come back. That's the brutal reality of the life you've chosen, and those that don't come back have no voice, and will never "ride" again. If, by "Baby Mama" you mean that you have produced a child, then you should start thinking about the future in a very different way.

Misplaced Loyalty

My friend, he used to look up to me. He was older, like 17. I thought I could trust him. After a couple weeks of knowing him, he used to come pick me up from school and everything. I used to spend the night at his house; he used to spend the night at mine.

One day I left the stuff I needed in the streets to survive, in a place that only my ninjas know about. I went down the block to a girl's house for like an hour, and when I came back, none of my stuff was there. He was gone, but all of my other friends were there. I never saw him again. I went to his house looking for him, but he was gone, disappeared.

-Dellaf

From The Beat: It's hard to know who to trust and who not to trust. The "evidence" that your older friend is the guilty party is what's called "circumstantial evidence" (meaning the circumstances point to him), but of course, you could never be sure. Maybe the real lessons is that "the stuff needed in the streets to survive" wasn't really needed to survive at all...

At Least We're Not Doin' Life

What's poppin' with The Beat? Yo', this be the big dawg Rocket F, you dig? You know me, just holding it down, waiting to get out.

But yeah, man, I hate when people in The Beat be crying 'cause they going to the Ranch or to somewhere else. If you ain't doin' life, you go be cool, B. Don't even trip off that. You go get out one day dawg. But my thugs that's doin' life, keep yo' head up brother

-Rocket

From The Beat: The problem with your advice is that if you don't trip about doing this little time, you'll just keep doing the things that lead you to places like this, only for longer and longer periods, until, like your "thugs doin' life," you finally have something to trip about. Now's the time to start tripping about giving away your freedom, even if it's just for a day or a month or a year. By the time you get to that life sentence, it's too late to trip...

I'm Gone

It's funny how there's so much money involved in this system, but we don't see none of it. They spend so much money finding ways to keep us in and not enough (they don't spend none at all) to keep us out. There's millions of ways to bring us back and the government continually sponsors and endorses the ideas of finding ways to incarcerate us, and even more ways to enhance little simple charges and make them something more than it is.

They offer all these different programs and classes while you're in jail, but very few (maybe one or two) can actually help you when you get out, and that's when it counts the most. That's why our state's recidivism rate is so high—we are not provided with any type of help to succeed when we're out. Maybe if they would spend even half of what they spend keeping us locked to keep us out, the jails wouldn't be so overcrowded. Even if they don't do it for us, then they should at least do it for the little kids growing up, so they could avoid this jail life that ruins your mind. But on a positive note, I'm out. I was supposed to leave yesterday, but they pushed me back one week for some BS, so I'm out next Thursday, instead. But it's been coming and was taking too long, but now it's time to go back.

-Birdman

From The Beat: By now you're home and we hope you're safe, free, and happy. You're right that youth getting out of juvy should utilize all the programs made available, but too many are simply interested in returning to the hood, where they will violate or pick up new charges. What programs would you like to do, that you'd find really practical and useful to your and their futures?

RIP, Boo-Bang

RIP, Boo-Bang. Everybody know Boo-Bang wanted to be from (our 'hood,) but he didn't make it in time. Them people came an' hit him up. We stay getting hit up. We getting took out the game, one by one.

-Chuck

From The Beat: What do you gain from all of this? Nothing. Both sides are losing friends to the system and to the graveyard.

Loyalty

What's good with The Beat? Once again it's yo' boy, Young Chink, live and direct, holdin' it down as the usually. Today's topic for me is I am going to acknowledge y'all on the word "loyalty."

The word "loyalty" to me means a variety of vocabulary words. A couple is trust, friendship, and honesty. Those are a couple of words that define loyalty to me. For you to possess loyalty you have to be extremely powerful. You have to give your whole life to that individual.

Some people are constantly disrespecting the world that I truly believe in. Fakin' their loyalty to seize you in the comfort zone, then, when the time is right, your so-called ninja, friend, brother, will assassinate you with no hesitation and take your belongings that you put your sweat and tears, heart and soul, strength and motivation into, to make your goal or dream a success.

That's a lil' somethin' for y'all to think about. Stay fly, separate the eagles from the seagulls and the real from the fake.

-Chinky

From The Beat: What about you? Is there anyone you feel as loyal to, as profoundly as you describe? If so, who is this person and how did s/he earn your trust? How do you show or prove your loyalty? Is there anyone who feels that respect and dedication toward you? How do you inspire it in them?

The Shield

It's ya boy, The Dude, hold mines down at the Ranch (temporary!) But I'm just spittin' it at y'all like it come, solid to the core.

Why is these ninjas using the system to protect themselves? I couldn't tell you why them suckas do it, but they just do it. Ninjas come to jail thinking the system go' protect them forever. While they locked up, they must think staff go' be everywhere they go, but they be forgettin' they gotta get out sooner or later. But forget them suckas! They go' be touched soon enough.

-The Dude

From The Beat: The system should protect any youth they have incarcerated, that's their responsibility. If you have problems with someone locked up with you, can you talk to them? How can you handle people you're beefing with besides threatening or hurting them inside or on the outs? Writing about "touching" someone means you intend to seek revenge. Grow up and stop being the fool, fool!

A Piece Of Paper

Different staff play with you like a "pedaso of papel" (piece of paper) so, anyways, I got only eight more months and I go be out, homies. Much love for all my homies.

-Snoopy

From The Beat: No one should play with or ever disrespect you. If you have a real complaint you want to write about, go ahead and detail it for The Beat.

If You Can't Handle The Game, Get Out

What's up, Beat? This is Enano. Today I want to talk about people that say that they want to change they life, because they locked up.

If you can't handle the game, get out and stop doing crimes, if you can't do the time. All you wannabees trying to be gangsta, stop trying. But if you with the game and ready to die for it and rep to the fullest, go ahead and do your thang, but know the consequences of it, so if you can't handle it, don't get with it.

This is yo' boy, Enano, and keep yo' head up.

-Enano

From The Beat: What about you? What advice that you're offering other young men and women, do you accept yourself? Do you think it's weak for you to get out of the game, or have you chosen to stay gangsta? Or do you think it's wise for you to get out now? You have other talents you could build your life around, but do you have the strength and/or heart to do it? You should commend those who wake up in the hall or the ranch and realize this gang mess is not for them. It's sure better than waking up in the pinta or in the CYA.

A Step Closer To Freedom

What's up with The Beat? It's ya boy, Lil' Rob, at the Ranch now. I have stepped it up from the hall. Now I am a step closer to freedom. I came over here because I was sentenced here by the judge because of that pistol charge. I was just sittin' in the halls for about three and a half months, just sittin' there, waiting just to get sent here, but now I'm here and I'm happy I'm out of the halls. I was tired of all the same programs and same food, expecting the same stuff every day, all the same food weekly, same detainees, but now I'm in a different setting and now I have to adapt to this, just like I adapted to the halls.

I know a lot of young people don't see being at the Ranch is freedom, but really, this is a step closer to freedom, because after this year I'm done for life of all this nonsense. Well, Beat, that's all I got for you today!

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: If coming to the Ranch reminds you of how precious your real freedom is to you, and encourages you to protect it when you're back on the outs, it's all good!

Running Is Not The Way To Go

Well I just want to say that running is not the way to go because it got me so messed up. It feels like I'm falling through the cracks. It feels like they forgot about me and it really hurts a lot to think that. And it hella hurts my family.

-Chris

From The Beat: You're absolutely right. Running is not the way to go. Running is not the answer to any of your problems. Part of growing up and maturing means that you have to face your problems and the consequences of your actions. We're glad to hear you talk like a responsible young man. Stay strong and you'll be out soon.

Loyalty To The End

I know for a fact my loyalty for my boys will never end and vice versa for them. The reason why I say this is because we got unconditional love for each other. We understand each other, and we're down with each other to the fullest, not just in fighting but also for life.

We understand each other even if we go down different paths. It's like that song Tupac, "I ain't mad at cha." All my homies know that is my favorite song because I always want them to know whatever they do, I will have their back and support them.

And the whole thing with betrayal, I know they won't betray me. It's just something that keeps us together. It's like a mother and a child. I'm not saying all mothers love and stay loyal to their child, but most of the time the mother and child will always love each other and always run back to each other. I guess that's the best I can explain this.

My loyalty will always be there through thick and thin. So my homies, this is a reminder, I'm down with you to the fullest. One life to live, livin' life to the fullest.

-Viet Tiger

From The Beat: We like the analogy of the bond between mother and child, but we want you to examine it closely and in detail. Sometimes, the child disappoints the mother, though she never stops loving him or her. Sometimes, she wishes the child would change his behavior, especially if what he is doing endangers his life or his freedom. Perhaps the most important lesson a mother can teach her child is to love himself or herself, so that the child treasures the very gift of life the mother provided. Treasure yourself, VT!

Screw It

I do care but I don't. So if I die fighting, oh well. If I don't, good. But I'm not suicidal and Harry Potter will say I'm dumb. Because he doesn't curse. But when you die, you get like 100 reincarnations. So ha, I get more lives than a cat. Ha.

-Jazmin

From The Beat: Sounds like Harry's got the best cards in your violent little game. Don't give us that reincarnation biz. Besides, we heard that if you do bad things, you get disincarnated. And what do you think about that - 100 negative lifetimes. Wouldn't you rather be a cat? Get wise Jazmin. We know you're ten tons smarter than this bull. So start acting that way.

Still Leaving...

Well Beat, this is another piece about me leaving to YA. I know you've heard it before. So have I. I currently believe I'll leave Wednesday. Who knows? I've already been re-sentenced once because of errors of the court. But I did get a good deal, so why complain? I'd rather be there anyway. This piece is short because my other is long. Goodnight.

-Monk

From The Beat: Be careful of what you wish for, Monk. Tell us why you'd rather be there than here? (And when you finally get there, write us again and tell us what you find.)

Fighting For My Life

My life is worth fighting for to me because everyday I wake up with a thirst for more. Whatever that more is I refuse to die until it's been attained. I feel my thirst being quenched after every fight.

My life has been in jeopardy many times but each person who has challenged my right to live has fallen before my fists. I thirst for battle and still there's more. If I could live long enough to find it I'll be happy. That something is to die at the hands of a great warrior or live forever to do battle 'till the end of time.

If I die I hope to be worthy to fight at the side of my God.

-The Dark Hunter

From The Beat: What kind of battles are you interested in fighting? And what do you exactly call fighting for your life? Fistfights do not count as fighting for your life. Unless you're two feet tall and fighting someone that is seven feet tall. A fistfight is exactly what it is. It's a fistfight. In this day in age, all the youngsters out there on the street are packing heat. It seems like you want to die by the gun, because there ain't no more warriors left. You should take that mentality you got to the army and go fight in Iraq. At least you'll get paid for it.

My loyalty

I'm trapped in a situation where it couldn't get no worse

So I keep my circle tight or else I'll wind up in a hearse
Loyalty above all laws is what I scream when I put in work

You couldn't step up in my shoes, because if you did you'd go berserk

Learned to never trust no man and learned to love no female/

'Cause it's situations like this that they wind up turning tail

So I ride on the lonely nights gazing at the sky
Ask the Lord to please forgive me for my sins in case I should ever die

So you'll never catch me slippin'
Matter of fact you must be trippin' if you think you could take my life

'Cause I'm loyal to the game and my life is full of strife
So when it comes to testin' my loyalty, you're on dope because I'm down to ride

-Chimy

From The Beat: How can you ask "the Lord" to forgive what you call sin/ When you've made it clear you have no loyalty to Him/You're loyal to boys, but not their Creator/Like hating the food but loving the waiter/ Living in prison is guaranteed to be lonely/So we hope you wake up before your life becomes a litany of "If only..."

A Rap I Made About When I Got Locked Up

I was posted in the parking lot do cops rolled up

He pointed his gun and told me not to run

So I got on my knees and put my hands on my head

I told the damn cop I ain't got nothin' man

he arrested me and patted me down

Took my filero(knife) and my Ipod and handed

everything I had to my great grandma

I asked her to please call my mom it's really important

I need to tell her I'm gone

then they put me in the car and took me to the station

Said I had to take my photo

once again...

-Lil' P-Nnut

From The Beat: Awful getting arrested and getting stripped from all your privileges that you had. But why you carrying around a knife? Doing things like that are for sure gonna just bring you to places like these. If you don't like getting arrested then stop doing things that are gonna put your freedom at risk.

I've Noticed

Since I've been locked up, I've noticed how much I have hurt my family and that what I did was wrong. I just want a second chance on the outs. My life will change.

This is my first and last time in here. I know it. I'm not making any promises, but I will try and focus on the future. The past is behind. It's time for a new year and a fresh start and to be a better person to my parents.

-Austin

From The Beat: Right you are. The time to start is now, today.

Flying Away

Five years down the drain because of you

It's okay, I forgive you

You used me and put me and put me through hell

It's okay, I forgive you

You left me and broke my heart into pieces

It okay, I forgive you

Just keep in mind, forgive and forget are two different things

Keep in mind no matter what you do I'll always be a king

But because of you my heart won't sing

I still think it's you every time the telephone rings

I won't forget the things you've done

See the pain in me has just begun

Every time I try and close our book

You take me in with words I call a hook

Pulling me close and close and close

Then strike me in my heart with those painful blows

I fall back in your chains 'cause it makes me feel better

But not this time; this time it's good-bye

Flying higher and higher in the sky

Goanna laugh and watch you on the ground

Even if you're sitting there with a frown

I'm still goanna pass 'round and around

As I point at you and say: "Not this time, Babe, not this time."

-Lefty

From The Beat: It's very hard to let someone you love go, even if by their actions they've shown you that the love you feel is not returned. And it's easy to fall for promises that pull you back in, because you always hope that things will change. All we can tell you is that the pain of lost love fades with time and with the discovery of new love.

What's Crackin'

The topic is, is my life worth fighting for? Hell yea it is.

Man if I die, I know my mom is going to suffer too much. She cries too much already. Imagine if I was dead, shhh I'm her baby boy. Can't have that stuff happen to my moms. Nah man she keeps me motivated on living day by day. I love my parents.

-Fd

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you say you love your parents and that your mom motivates you to keep living everyday. Does she ever motivate you to stay out of trouble? We know that you don't want to make her cry no more. Why is it difficult to stop coming to the halls?

Proving My Loyalty

I proved my loyalty when I got rushed with my boy down the street of my house. My homeboy fell in the middle of traffic and the rival gang member jumped on him and started to swing. My homie thought I would run away.

-No Name

From The Beat: Okay, so you didn't run away. And then what happened? You need to give us a lot more details and put a name to what you write, please.

Life Worth It?

Is my life worth it?

Of course it is. I'm me.

That's because I need more knowledge.

I can't leave my family.

I've seen a lot of things.

But I know there's more for me.

My mind is set for future goals.

These goals are unique

so if I die today

my whole life is incomplete.

I need to stay alive.

Who's gonna help me?

Just me!

-Big Keno (Keenan)

From The Beat: Well, you carry the heavy load, but there are lots of folks who will help you. Friends and family make our lives worthwhile.

What I Want To Do When I Get Out

Well what I want to do when I get out I want to do good and I want to show my family more respect and be good at home. I also would like to spend time with them to and be loyal to them.

I also want to see my baby girl when I get out and be loyal to her. And she can show me the same. My family and my baby girl are two things that matter in my life. Well that's all I got.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you say all these positive things about what you're going to do when you get out. We hope you follow through on everything you're saying. You have to realize the most important things in life are your family and your baby girl. We hope you act on what you're saying and manage to stay focus. It's not that hard and with hard work and determination you can do it.

Fighting For

The people that I will fight for is my family and my lady. They're the ones that I love the most I want to treat them good and be good to them. And be loyal to them. And do whatever I can for them.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: First you need to stay out of trouble so you can be there for your family. We're glad that you have the right intentions, but just do it! Everybody talks about how good they're gonna do once they get out but always seem to find a way back here. How are you going to be different from those kind of people? Do you have a game plan?

Tears And Pain

Tears in this heart,

pain in these eyes,

love in this soul,

but yet I'm not hurting.

Life is hopeful,

dreams are real,

hope is everything,

so why is life hard?

Homicides don't faze me

but losing someone does.

Chances come and go.

Mine's here, so do I take it?

Or is it going to pass?

Well, that's life.

-Lil' Playboy

From The Beat: Life is whatever you wanna make it out to be. All those emotions you're describing are a part of life. There are gonna be moments when we're sad, things will get painful, there are dreams to chase, things to hope for. But when your chance comes take it. Don't waste it. We don't get too many chances in our lifetime.

Do Good

Well right now I'm doing hall time right now. I'm doing 120 days. It's hella whack. I wish I never cut my EMP. Right now I'm being good and treating my family good and with respect to my lady as well. I just want to do good and just go to school. Well to every one in here stay out and do good.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: We're glad that you plan on doing good. We hope that you stay focused and positive. You should always treat your loved ones with love and respect. Friends come and go, but family and loved ones are there for you whenever you need them the most.

New Life

As I walk a narrow path, I see my life changing fast.

I'm tired. I made my life a wreck.

God change me if you can.

Bring me back.

When I was a little girl I never understood the misery and pain I put my loved one through.

Mahal kita mommy, you're my everything.

-Vicious

From The Beat: Well, you understand now. And now that you do, are you ready to stop? Are you ready to begin a new way of dealing with your own pain and misery?

Should Have Never Went

It was last year, May 20th of 2007, me and my homies were gonna go to the mall, but then we decided to go to a homie's house. He was suppose to pick us up but he couldn't, so he told us to walk. I told my homies no, 'cause that's enemy's territory but they said nothing's gonna happen cause it was day time. So we got on the bus and got dropped off by that hood. As we were walking down the street, all we heard was tires burning out and then we heard gunshots. We all ran and ducked behind things we can be protected by, but one of my homies got shot 2 times, one in the leg and one in the chest. He died that same day that's why we shouldn't have went. RIP Lil' Looney

-S

From The Beat: Damn we're sorry to hear about your friend. You could sit there and say all the could've, should've, and would've, but things happen. You didn't know something that drastic was gonna go down. It's hard losing somebody you care for and love. But if you're gonna be banging and living this lifestyle this is what's gonna come of it. You're gonna end up losing more of your friends either because they're gonna get locked up in the Pen for a long time or they're gonna pass away. That's a guarantee living this kind of life so think long and hard about what you wanna do. By the way, you need a new Beat name, Sharky is not going to cut it.

Violations

They put me in here for violations of EMP but that's B-S.

I was only smoking weed

They tried to put me down

But I don't even have a frown on my face

I just feel disgraced

Because they put me in this whack place

Well late, gotta go

Stay up, keep yo head up and think positive, gone.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Rules are rules. You can't expect to not get violated if you don't follow the rules. We're not trying to stay stop smoking, but if you do want to stay free you gotta do it. It's your choice. You can choose to get high temporarily and get locked up, or just get your EMP or whatever over with. Get off probation at least and then do whatever the hell you want.

Loyalty To My Daddy

What's cracking Beat? Today my topic is about loyalty.

The one person that I would say has all my heart would have to be my baby's daddy. My history with him is just that I met him from a friend and since we saw each other we started talking I feel strongly about him. He's always been there for me and he was the first person that said he loved me and actually proved it to me. I really don't feel I have to do anything to prove myself because if someone loves me and they know I do too, there's nothing to prove.

Loyalty, to me, is when the one person you love is dedicated to just you and loves you and proves it to you. Actions speak louder than words.

-Sad Eyes

From The Beat: Yes, they do. We hope you've each found your honest voices and that you can be the partners and parents you'd really like to be.

Time

I've been in here for only a minute but its felt like three years. It's been too long. It's been boring since the first second.

I think I've read a whole library since there's nothing else to do.

Hella bored 24/7 seven days a week sitting in my room. Everyone's gotten out and come back in. after awhile everyone gets on my nerves.

Three months have gone by sitting in my room. If any of you readers just got locked up get out and stay out. It's boring, nothing to do.

-Andy Dick

From The Beat: You see people come and go. Why do you think people get out and get the opportunity of freedom but waste it and come right back? Did you learn anything in your time in the hall? Do you learn anything from these people that come in and out? What are your plans when you finally get out? Do you plan on staying out or do you plan on being one of those people that come right back?

Should Have Said No!

There's a situation where I should have walked away, it was when me and one of my homeboy's decided to break into a school and steal some laptops. I should have told him NO! But I wasn't thinking and I didn't want to seem like a punk so I did it with him. We would have got away with it to but he ended up getting caught up and snitched on me. I wouldn't be in this dumb place. It's all right though 'cause I'm getting out soon so it's alright.

-Baby Boi

From The Beat: You shouldn't have done what you did, especially in the schools man. That's so young people like you can get an education. Arnold is already cutting funds back on schools and you want to go and steal from them? We hope you learned your lesson.

RIP Elmo

Well this one goes out to the homie Elmo, RIP. Well I want to talk about my homie Elmo. He was my best friend. Me and him were like best friends. Me and him went to the same school when we were little. We always use to get into fights with people that had problems with us. Until the day he got by a car. That was the worst day of my life.

RIP Elmo

-Sleepy

From The Beat: Damn we're sorry to hear about Elmo. RIP. It's hard to deal with a loss of loved one. How do you honor and keep his name alive?

Stressing

Man this is S. I'm up in here stressing. First off, I'm stressing because I'm up in here.

Second off, I can't be with my grandma, and she really needs me.

Next, my squad ain't at the same place.

The thing that got me really stressing in here is that my girl is in here too, but they got us in different units. We were in the same unit until some trifling dust bucket lied on us. I didn't intend to put all what happened out there like that, but let me tell whoever may read this - if what she said was true, I would tell you and everybody the truth. But what she said wasn't true. It was outta pocket. Well, I'm out of time.

-S

From The Beat: We advise you to address the real problem first. The real problem is that you are messing up on the outs. And to be able to stop messing up, you have to be honest and acknowledge why you're messing up. Do you know why? If you don't know why, you aren't asking yourself the right questions. Get to the root of it.

Forget Loyalty When It Comes To Guys

In all my relationships I think loyalty wasn't important and that guys were just, or still are, a toy just to have fun with. 'Till this day I just see guys as a toy and like my girl Barbie says, I don't expect much from a guy, just to have fun with them, and I really don't expect a guy to fall for me, even though they do. Guys, for me, are liars, cheaters and other things - more than would fill up the whole paper. Anyways, that's it for today Beat. 'Till next time.

-L

From The Beat: Sounds to us like you aren't really ready to play on the board game of life. You don't even know the rules. The rules are that you treat other people the way you'd really like to be treated. Anything less disqualifies you. Learn-up L. Time's a wasting.

To My Lady

The loyalty that I had is with my lady. Because I know she is to all the way or to the end of time. So that's why I'm faithful to her, to the end of time. I love her and she loves me.

--Luis

From The Beat: Luis, these are some beautiful things you've written about your lady. We hope you continue to have a relationship with her that will help both of you to grow into better people.

Together Forever, I Hope

What up Beat? My topic's on loyalty.

The man I can say has my whole heart is my boyfriend. He's my everything! I wouldn't change him for anything in this world. We have been together through our worst times but also out best times. Yes, I can admit that I have done things for him that I feel weren't right, but my love for him is greater then anything, so I'll pretty much do anything for him. I know for a fact that he would do the same. I know that he has done things for me too that he might have thought weren't right, but he'll do anything for me. I'm his world and he's my world. We're forever. Well its true - how do I know he's really loyal to me? Well, I hope so. I talk to him everyday. He writes me two letters a day. I know that it might not be enough for some females, but for me it is. I trust him 100%. That plays a big role in all this. My boyfriend and I - forever!

-M's Girl

From The Beat: So, what happens when you do things for each other that aren't the right things to do? We know the answer, and so do you.

Is My Life Worth Fighting For

Well, today I'm gonna talk about me and my life. I think my life is worth fighting for because fools be talking shhh and just run they mouth. I ain't gonna let no beezie talk shhh to me 'cause I ain't like that. I live that life, you know, and I am from San Jose.

What happened is that she was saying something about me that wasn't true, so I ran up on her after school and I said: I heard you been talking shhh, but she denied it and started yelling, so I just got hella mad and just hit her in her face and grabbed her and threw her on the floor and start bashing her face on the ground and start stomping on her face. Then a lady came up and called the cops and I ran and got away, but the next day I got arrested. And I injured her skull and sent her to the hospital.

- Giggles

From The Beat: You seem proud of what you did to this girl, and claim your neighborhood to back it all up. You may think violence is the way to solve problems, but truth is it only makes matters worse. But it seems like you were really upset. Have you learned anything from getting locked up over this? We'd love for you to write about that next time.

Free Style

Well Beat this is it I'm finally out to the ranch this week I've been down for five months, with six more to go. And well to tell ya I'm not feeling any of the topics today so I'm kick a free style. Well here goes nothing.

-Worm

From The Beat: The free style misses the point. The Beat is about teaching, not talking mess and hating.

My Problem

Q-vote - what's up Beat? Well I've got a problem. I have two boyfriends. They both make me happy, but I know that it's not right to have two boyfriends at once but my heart is stuck in the middle. What do I do? Well, I hope I get an answer sometime soon cause it is very stressing.

-Payasa

From The Beat: Uh-oh, this is a big problem! The most important thing to do is realize that you will hurt one of them - and probably both when they find out. Be careful and do the right thing.

My Wife

I'm laying down in my cell
my heart begins to dwell
as my tired eyes start to swell
can't control my crying
so tired of all the lying
because deep inside
my hope is dying.
I look into your eyes
deep into your soul
I see an amazing person
she is beautiful, smart, loving, sweet,
and best of all - mine.
No matter what happens to us
I know I'll always have her there
I really love her and
when we are older
one day she will be my wife.

-Rainbow

From The Beat: Another sweet poem, Rainbow! Those moments of intense thinking about our loved ones are sometimes even more intense then being with them. We wish you the best of luck with your mom and your girl.

Is My Life Worth Fighting For

Yes, I feel like my life is definitely worth fighting for. That's why I fight, 'cause a lot of people are gonna hate regardless especially being that I'm Black, Puerto Rican and Cuban from the Town (Oakland) and I speak Spanish. So I get hated on. But it motivates me to the fullest.

I grew up with nine brothers and six sisters and they're all I need. I am worth more than people think. I'm gonna make it far in life. I want to be a doctor like my mamma, but if not I want to be a PO.

Also my family are the ones who will put up battles just to keep Sha T alive. But yea I'm out. Peace in the Middle East.

-Sha T

From The Beat: Wow, nine brothers and six sisters sounds like you always will have an army on your side! Another great piece from the heart. Thanks Sha T!

My Grandma

My grandma gives me hope. She's like my backbone. She's always there for me and she always gives me another chance. I know my Grandma loves me and I love her, too. She always wants me to do good. Grandmas always want their grandchildren to do good. Everyone should do good in life because if you mess up trust - believe me, you will regret it. Grandmas are always there for you and they're always cleaning, even when it's not dirty. That's why I love my grandma.

-Nessa

From The Beat: Grandmas are really good for unconditionally loving their grandchildren. That's funny what you say about them always cleaning. Do you see yourself being like your grandmother one day?

My Mom Gives Me Hope

The one I call out to for hope is my mother. She is the love of my life. I call upon her for comfort, when I'm sad, mad, or even stressed out. Life would be difficult if she weren't here.

Ladies, gents, appreciate the time you have with the ones you love, never take anything for granted because we never know when they might leave our sides. We all hope for better days, but make the best of today cause there might not be any tomorrow...

-Cherisse

From The Beat: This is great advice but often hard to follow, especially when we are young and we take our parents and loved one's for granted. It seems like you and your mother have a really close relationship.

For You

Now it is Friday, and I'm getting released! I'm hella happy but I'm sad. The reason I'm happy is because I'm getting out and going to start my program and then the reason why I'm sad is because I met my roommate Ezzy and she is hella cool and also I got hella close to her and now that I'm leaving, it sucks because she's the one that kept me on my feet.

Now that I won't have her by my side, I do not know if I could make it on my own. But I just wanted to give my respect and love and say it was nice having you as my roommate. Well, also I will like to say that I will hella miss you. Well keep your head up in the clouds. Oh, I'm going to miss my Cupcake too. Well I'm out.

-Esmeralda

From The Beat: It is really nice to see how strong friendships can develop in such difficult circumstances. Hopefully you guys will stay friends and continue to support each other even on the outs.

Walking Away?

Hey Beat, well first of all on Valentine's Day.

I walked away from my man but it was not as bad as the last time. We have gotten into fights before, but we would get back together. But this last time it was so bad that I think we are not going to get back together, but I still have hopes that we do. Dang, I hella miss him and up to this day - I really love him and want him to know that I forgive me and that he's still in my life and on my heart.

So to all the people that are locked up: Keep your head up high that your day will come. God Bless everybody. And one more thing: To my baby Luis Reyes Wells - I love you always!

-Keila

From The Beat: Sometimes we have to walk away from people who are treating us bad, even if we still really love them. From what you said, you were in a bad situation with this guy and his family and if he didn't believe you - you made the right decision.

Why I Fight

What up Beat. This is Larry from Gilroy.

To me the things that push me to strive every day are my family, thinking about who I would hurt and leave behind.

The thing that also pushes me is a promise that I made with my Uncle who passed away. I promised him that I would get my high school diploma and make something with my life. I am not just going to be a hero, I plan on being a legend.

My life is priceless to me and anyone that doesn't think that - they should sit back and think about it.

People say they love themselves when they put all different toxics and stuff in their bodies that are killing them slowly.

That's it until next time.

-Larry

From The Beat: We totally support you and hope you end up not just as a hero, but as a positive legend in your community. This doesn't have to wait for the future. You can start being a legend now by making the right choices every day. And true legends may not be popular people, but they are the ones that do the right things.

Fight Of My Life

Take a look at my life

And visualize all the sins

I committed, when, situations arose

I never shook the block

I loved the sensation of the 45

Click and pop

Alive at twenty-five

Was nothing but a fantasy

Expected to die

In a drive-by

Another fallen soulja

Victim of a homicide

So ride or collide

Ain't expected to survive

With these murderous thoughts

Flowing through my mind

One chance to make it

And this is the time

So kick back time to rewind

I'm out.

-Ace

From The Beat: We sure agree with you when you say that there's one chance to make it and this is the time, because we don't know what the future is holding for us. So what are you going to do with the next chance that comes along, the chance that might be last? We would grab that chance, and make the decision to turn my life around.

My Life

Yes my life is worth fighting, I'm here in this world for a reason, I was born for a reason so in my eyes I'm here to fight for my life. My reason is my family, I'm here for my family, to support them and help them. Is my life a life worth fighting for, yes it is worth fighting for.

-Cash

From The Beat: You're right. Life is worth it. We're here for a reason. A big part of that is a person's family. Keep on elaborating, and working on this idea of yours. Share it with others, and perhaps think about other reasons why life is worth fighting for.

Walking Away

One time I was at a store and my friends and I were about to do a beer run at the store and I had a very bad feeling the whole time. My friends kept pressuring me so we were about to do it. I kept on saying no. Right at that time a cop passed by and looked at us. Then a couple of kids ran out with beers so the cop chased them. We got lucky so we bounced and just bought the beer instead. Sometimes you just got to follow your instinct and turn away.

- SJ Boy

From The Beat: We can tell you learned a valuable lesson from this incident; following your conscience is a good idea. The world around us may tell us our conscience is wrong, but let it be your guide when it comes to sticking around or turning away.

My Cool Roommate

What's up? Thank you for writing me in The Beat. I am hella gonna miss you two and I wish you the best and the next time I see it better be in the out's, okay? It was hella coo' being you roommate too. I have to say is that I hope you do good and keep your head up and don't let any hyna get you down, okay? Well, it was nice knowing you up in here. Remember my little saying: "Tell it like it is." Well much love and respect.

-Lil' Ezzy

From The Beat: There is nothing like a good girlfriend who backs you up, makes you laugh and provides you with everyday knowledge. It's good to know you found a good friend. Thanks for sharing with us all.

Hard Life

Is my life worth living for – not as much as others think. I live a gangsta life. So as far as my life goes screw it. I really don't care if I go 'cause if I do, then it's my time to go. But my family would hurt very much. But when I go I don't want people to hurt 'cause I'm not worth it. I've done a lot of shhh in my life that I'm not proud of. So if I get taken out, look at it this way – one less gangsta to worry about.

The streets where I live are full of people that don't like me. No one as others. I'm from San Jose. So when you see me say what's up and don't have a life like mine. Be something in life. And care about what you do. And always remember these words.

When you were born you cried when everybody was happy. But the only question that matters is this – when you die, will you be happy when everyone else is crying?

So stay up family.

-Lucky

From The Beat: After reading what you've written, we really think that you are worth it. A mind that's as great as yours is too precious. You give a good message that everyone needs to hear, so keep telling it, and push your self to see beyond the hood. Thanks for the bringing up the all-important question. It's important for us to keep on asking that whenever we're faced with a decision that could have great consequences.

Walking Away

There have been so many times I wanted to walk away from everything but why? The life I know is the life I live and for me there's no other way even though I lost respect in the streets but I know what I did I just have to start over again or die trying 'cause this is the life I know so there can't be no walking away only walking smarter and show I'm mad wrong and Indian trying to bang shhh, I'm mad!

-Trey

From The Beat: The life you know is the life you live. Great point. So how about we branch out and explore other people's lives? Look into books, and talk to others who seem to have their unique way of making a positive mark on the world. You might find a life that attracts you, and following that model might just be the beginning of a great change for you.

A Vicious Life

My life is made up of hostility to the government. I'm a menace to society.

I'm known to dismantle my enemy.

Ef the world and everybody in it and that's my mentality.

To me the real are born into this life of hatred

While the fake try to make it in the life I lead.

I stay on my toes and never fall

I'm loved by few, hated by many, respected by all.

I'm known as Trouble.

To all locked up do what you do and don't let the system get you down.

- Vicious

From The Beat: You are not alone in feeling hostility toward the government. You consider yourself a menace to society, but ask yourself this: Do I choose to be a menace? Our guess is that you did not end up in the Hall by choice and that your actions thus far are guided by survival than by free will. If this is true, what about the system needs to change so that your fellow homeboys and homegirls do not suffer the same consequence?

Loyal To My Dude

I've always been loyal to my dude. But a time I really felt loyal towards him was when he was recently in the hospital. I showed up everyday to be with him, bring him food, and just spend time with him.

Now I felt like he's been loyal towards me because since I've been here he's wrote me and added money on his phone, and our relationship is just going on five months but we've been through a lot and were being loyal towards each other.

-Tamara

From The Beat: For such a short time, it does sound like the two of you have something close. Loyalty and care in a romantic relationship is really comforting.

Leaving

Well when I was out about the end of November, I was mad at my friend Lips. We were kicking it in his hood. We were just drinking and kickin' back. We were talking smack to each other and I was getting irritated.

Then after about 10 minutes, I called my dad to pick me up and he did. Then when I was about five minutes away from his house, Lips called me and told me thank God I had left because they had just shot at the apartments.

-Payasa

From The Beat: Moments like these when fate moves us out of the way of harm are always memorable. But when do we stop thinking it is luck and start making smarter decisions about where to be and who to be with?

True To Loyalty

Loyalty is what keeps me going,
If there's no loyalty then there is no respect,
An if there's no respect then you're nothing,
It's loyalty above all laws.
Death before dishonor and will not be stopped
That's the way we were taught.
I was brought up not to give an ef.

-Young and Foolish

From The Beat: Most people, even those in law enforcement, would agree that some situations call for action that may be technically illegal - a husband speeding his pregnant wife to the delivery room or a priest refusing to reveal an incriminating confession. In these cases, people appeal to what some refer to as a moral law. Tell us what you mean when you say that you are "loyal above all laws". Is this loyalty absolute or does it apply only in circumstances like the ones mentioned above?

Words

Beat, What's Crackin'. It's me and I want to thank your program for coming and trying to help us. Unfortunately some just come to get time out of their room. Like me. But I do write to express myself to people who are willing to help me. But it might not change my mind. Don't get in trouble.

-Jeff

From The Beat: Well Jeff, we appreciate that you choose to express yourself through writing, regardless of the reason.

I Strive To Survive

Ay, what's crackin' Beat and fellow inmates in juvie.

Well, is my life really worth fighting for? To me, yes, because I strive to survive and gang bangin' is just putting more pressure on me. I'm saying that because when I walk down the street, fools just be hitting me up just because of the color red or my appearance.

Well, I don't want to deal with that anymore because I'm always with my baby's momma and I don't want to put her life on the line. I'm gonna be in here for a while because of an assault with a deadly weapon but when I get out I'm gonna change my life because I want to work and support my beautiful wife and my soon coming baby. I'm saying wife because next year when I'm eighteen, me and my girl are getting married so I can't wait.

Take this as advice: throw it down for yourself, but for your baby's mommas and family, throw it down even harder.

I gotta cut this short, but to all, stay up and even those facing hard time keep striving because you all will be out soon. One love!

-Sammy

From the Beat: Sometimes having others that you care about and love makes avoiding the danger of gang banging easier. You have an awesome opportunity here, Sammy, because you are choosing a better life in order to make a great future for your family. But remember that although supporting your new family helped you understand that you need to improve your life, you must make these changes for yourself too.

Getting My Diploma

My life is worth fighting for because I want to get a High School Diploma so I can get a good job and then I can step it up a notch and go to college and then I could get a legit job and buy a big ass house and bad ass cars and have a fine ass hyna. Well 'till next time Beat, stay up.

-Abraham

From The Beat: It's crucial you understand that your education can help you create a wonderful future for yourself. Having a life worth fighting for should help you figure out what value your life has. Do you think that there may be more to life than your material wealth?

Life Ain't No Joke

To me, my life matters a lot. Life ain't no joke. You could be here at one time and gone the next. For me, I live for myself, my family, and my lady. I ain't trying to get caught up and just be a number in the system. Hell no, there's more to life than that. I used to get into trouble, but now my eyes opened up since I been in here.

I want to be somebody someday and make something of my life. Used to live everyday and say whatever happens happens, have fun while I'm here. After getting locked up I changed my life around. Now I ain't gonna get in trouble anymore. I ain't never coming back here. I'm gonna get out and go to school and graduate from high school and college. And live my life with my lady and start a family. That's it for now. Late.

-A

From The Beat: When we understand that life is not something to be taken lightly, we become more careful about how we behave and what we involve ourselves in. A, now that you see a new way to live your life, you have a reason to avoid people and situations that will only bring trouble to your life. With this changed life, you can have positive influence on your family and your lady, and in turn, they can remind you of the reasons that made you decide to change your life.

Loyal To My Parents

My whole heart is deeply loyal to my family, especially my parents. My parents gave life to me and have been in my life for years. They have been in my life for years. They have been there for me for the good, and the worst, but in all they're always there. I feel that my loyalty goes far, for eternity.

-A son

From The Beat: Eternity is a very long time to commit to something (Imagine having to pay bills for an eternity). The difference here, as you well know, is that you are committing to an eternity of loyalty that brings you nothing but happiness. Do everything you can to maintain that bond because in truth, it is all any of us have.

My Life Is A Life Worth Fighting For

Yes my life is worth fighting for. Before I came in here I didn't have any goals or a plan for my future. I just lived day by day making it the best till I came here. Each day I sit and think about my life and family.

I have made a lot of goals and have a plan now for my future. I want to go to SJSU with my brother and I hope one day we get to take over my dad's business.

Being locked up isn't how I want to live my life. My mom is the main person who is supporting me through all of this. When I get out I want to make my family and parents proud. My mom comes everyday to visit me, I hate to have her see me in a situation like this. I seen her cry so much in the past 5 weeks I been here.

Every day I wake up and thank God that he gave me another day to live. My parents go to my courts and show support and show the judge they are here for me and my brother, were both locked up. My parents and family will always be here for me if anything happens. Keeping my goals in my head keeps my motivated. I can't wait until I get out.

I had court today and I could have got out but my judge wanted to talk to my PO. My PO recommended house arrest but the judge wanted to talk to her about it, so me and my brother find out tomorrow if we get out or not.

-Beto A.

From The Beat: It's awesome that you have set plans and goals for yourself. That's the first step towards lasting change. Keep it up and use these experiences to stay focused on what you value!

Driven in Another Direction

As I sit alone with myself 'cause that's all I got
There's not a moment in my life where death doesn't
enter my thoughts

It's a shame I had to waste my life like this
Solving my problems by drowning in this bottle as I put
it to my lips

Feeling regret but still no repent of what I've done
'Cause if I didn't do what I did I wouldn't be in this place
Praying to the father and son

My motives are driven by anger and rage in a different
stage of shock

When I be moving swiftly, briefly throw my block
feeling nothing 'cause my heart just dropped.

Criminal-minded, they say, we're a threat to society
walking blinded

But become blinded as I write this anger how do I hide it
But I still look in both directions but I still see no hope

As I look on I realize that I'm all alone

Am I tripping is it just me feeling this way
So I pray don't slam the gate on my face when my faith
comes to pass on judgment day

So to all who feel me stay up and stay strong
'Cause there's better days to come in this journey I'm
living ain't wrong

-Attempt to resent my repents

From The Beat: Faith has been a major theme in this week's Beat. Yours seems to carry you through your contemplation of death, the mistakes you so deeply regret and all the misery that is borne by you and your fellow inmates. We are impressed by the strength of your faith, but isn't there someone that you turn to when you really need a person to lean on? If so, tell us about this person next week and stay strong in the meantime.

My Life

I should have walked away when I was at a shopping
center where a cop was posing. But I stayed with my lil'
bro and my best homie Tiny 'cause he's blood too. But
I decided to stay 'cause if they go down I'm going down
with them. It's just how it goes, that's all.

-Big Marquez

From The Beat: That's great that you're really loyal to them, but wouldn't it have been better not to be there in the first place?

Aspects of Life

Life never ends its like were stuck in the three aspects
of life.

Past, Present, Future.

The past is just a memory in which there is no return
to the future is just a dream, a dream no one can truly
tell is going to happen.

The present is now.

See me, I believe we are in the past, present, and the
future at the same time.

The past I believe we are living changes depending on
the decisions we choose to make.

The future we will die possibly start over where you
began your life all over again.

The present we live in temporarily 'till times up then the
process of life begins again.

I'm not sure how to explain it, buy yea that's life.

-L

From The Beat: L, it seems like you've been putting a lot of thought into your understanding of the flow of life. As you take the time to figure out this complicated subject, make sure you also take time to understand its application to your own life. Don't dwell on the past. Like you said, there's no return. But if you don't make an effort to correct the behavior that brings negative pressures on your life, how can you make wiser decisions in the present that will create for you a better future?

My Girl

Well I'm loyal to my girl because my girl got's my heart.
She loves me. Well, Beat, the history that I have with my
girl is good. Me and my girl been together for a pretty long
time. We been through thick and thin. Pues that's it for
now Beat. Alrato keep you're head up.

-Spider

From The Beat: It sounds as if you and your girl have managed to stay together in the midst of your incarceration. If that is not "thick and thin" I'm not sure what is. What is it about your girl that keeps the bond so strong? How do you maintain the relationship without seeing her?

A Change In Life

I think my life is worth fighting for because I and others
all deserve a change in life. Also you can't live anybody
else's life but yours. I think the best thing right now
is school because the best thing you can do is learn. I
wanna learn something I can be good at. So I can explore
the world.

-Eddie

From The Beat: Education is definitely your key to unlocking many great things in your life, and you're right—you can only live your own life. Will knowing this keep you focused on making these changes after release?

Loyalty

When it comes to loyalty, I am loyal to my family. My
family consists of my mom, my baby's mom, my daughter,
and my homeboys.

I'm loyal to my mom 'cause she's the woman who
gave birth to me, brought me in this world and took care
of me.

I'm loyal to my baby's mom 'cause she is the mother
of my child, and I've always been a violent type when I
was younger, hitting girls, gang banging, being a player
with all the girls, living my life. But I promised my baby's
mom that I wouldn't do any of that being a player, and
hitting girls bullshhh. I grew up and I don't even see how
I thought that way before.

I'm loyal to my daughter 'cause that's my child, that's
part of me and her put together in one for nine months,
so I'll always love and I'll always be loyal and true to her.

I'll always stay loyal to my homeboys they're loyal to
me and I'll always be loyal to them 'til either one of us
gets taken off this earth.

-Joseph

From The Beat: It's a great thing that you know exactly where your loyalties lie and we like that you gave great reasons for them. It sounds like your girl has had a positive influence on you, as has having a child. You say you "grew up." You're definitely on your way to maturity but everybody can keep growing. How else can you grow? How is having a beautiful baby daughter helped you grow, hopefully by staying away from the so-called loyal homies.

Love for My Lil' Sis

To The Beat: Well I can write on all the topics today, but
I'm going to write on "your thoughts on a current event."

My sis is a lesbian and ever since everyone found out
I would fight everyone that would say something about
her or her lady 'cause her lady was like a lil' sis to me too.
So I would be fighting a lot almost every day. Well I just
wanted to share that so til' next week late.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Attitudes within the Hall towards homosexuality are very mixed. Just as in the general population, fellow inmates have a wide range of views, some hateful, some compassionate. Your experience is unique and has made it plain that gays and lesbians are just as human as anyone else and deserve the same amount of dignity. Instead of fighting, what would you say to all those who view your sister as abnormal or less deserving of their respect?

Walking Away

I found my self in tough situations. If I would have walked away I would have not been in this place I am in now. I could have been at home with my family. Instead I am suffering in here. But when I get out I am going to do better in life. I just want to graduate high school and get my diploma so I can get a good job and be something in life. I just don't want to end up back here in the hall.

-Lil' Bear

From the Beat: We all have had situations where we should have walked away instead of getting involved. We can't change the past, but we can change the future if we understand what we did and learn from it. You know the consequences of your actions, and the suffering that you feel now has helped you understand that each decision requires clear thinking.

Hungry

When I get out, I'm going to get some Shrimp Fried Rice. Then I'm going to call my female friend over. She's just a friend if you know what I mean. After that I'm going to get a legit job and buy some videogames to keep me entertained instead of smoking, drinking, shrooming, etc. Work the programs and hopefully stay out of Santa Clara County.

-P

From the Beat: We like that you say you're going to get a job and work the programs. Now you have to back up your words with your actions.

Walking Away

Hey Beat, today I am going to write about walking away from a friend. I could have fought because I could have ended up not homeboys again. So I just did not do anything and just ignored my homeboy and made him more mad.

-Chango

From the Beat: We're proud that you took the time to understand what would happen if you decided to fight. Leading your decision with this kind of thought will keep you out of places like the Hall. Keep thinking and writing.

Grandma

What gives me hope is my grandma. She is who gives me hope. Why? 'Cause when I need something, she'll be there and will be like: "Hey, let's go to the outlets in Gilroy and I'll get you some clothes." I'll be like: "Thanks grandma." I love when my grandma - gives me hope and shows me love, I feel so happy.

-Ricky Suave

From The Beat: There's nothing like the guilt-free gifts one gets from our grandmother. Spend as much quality time with her while you can - unconditional love like that is rare.

Loyalty

My ex-girlfriend was the most loyal person I have ever met. I feel really bad about the way I treated her. I wish I was more loyal to her. I messed up and ruined our relationship by cheating on her. After 2 and a half years she stayed 100% completely loyal to me, I wish I could have been a better person to her, I hurt her feelings very bad and I screwed it up. Now I'm sitting here wishing I did things differently.

-S

From The Beat: We all make mistakes. Some of us don't realize them or wish to change them, though. It's good that you know what you did wrong and now you can learn from your mistake. Your ex sounds like a strong girl and even if you can't be with her, you know you can follow her example of loyalty.

A Loyal Puppet

Loyalty is what I show you Babygirl, 'cause since the very first day you treated me like royalty. Every time I see you say you're my queen and I tell you that I'm your king. This love stuff is really our thing.

Since you had me daughter from the start and then on I knew you had my heart, now we both recognize that we are both hypnotized for each other, and that we're down for one another. For one another we got passion and people know that so there's no question about what we feel 'cause this love thing is for real babygirl. I love you Olga.

-Puppet

From the Beat: Nice rhymes, Puppet. You say "this love thing is for real" and we believe you. But the love thing is probably on hold if you're locked up. Can she be enough motivation for you to stay out?

Money Don't Bring Happiness

I'm locked up for trying to survive. I got caught with somewhat a lot of drugs. Its sucks because I was doing it to have money in my pockets. I tried to give money to my mom but I got caught. I gave money to my brother and he was happy. But now, being in here, I see money doesn't bring happiness to me - it bring pain. So I got court in a week. Hopefully, I get out and get a real job to help out my family.

My brother is in here as well - for carrying my stuff and he got court on the same day. Hopefully he gets out as well. This is just one of my problems. There are dozens more. Wish me luck everyone yadada

- Alex

From The Beat: This seems like a great lesson that you learned and perhaps you had to make this mistake to change. The real test will be if you will change when you get out. Perhaps you and your brother can make a pact to work together to keep each other straight.

Walking Away

I find myself in a body full of pride.
I find it hard to walk away from the adrenaline that I love.

I have been through various situations
Where it's extremely difficult to walk away, due to my pride.

I can't handle walking away
because I care too much about what people opinion towards me will be.

I wish I had walked away from the last situation that got me here in the first place.

A word of advice: don't Let your pride get in the way and don't let it take over you
because if you fight you will end up in this horrible place.

Next time you get put on the spot just take a minute to think about your choice and make it wise. I wish I had done that! And I wish I had listened to the talks my parents had told me.

And just want to say stay out of trouble and to stay out of fights.

Much love and respect from Oscar

- Oscar

From the Beat: Pride is the culprit behind many of our bad decisions. When we learn how to live for ourselves and not others, we can live a happier, peaceful life. Now that you know you get a rush from putting yourself in tense situations, maybe you can try this one: when people are expecting you to do something that you know you shouldn't do and your pride is on the line—stop, think, and do what is right. You'll find that doing the right thing when everyone says not to takes much more adrenaline and pride than pleasing everybody.

My Parents

What it do Beat? Well it's your boy Babyboy and I'm going to say I miss my mom and dad.

I love you mom and dad and when I get out I'm going to make you happy. Mom and dad I'm going to go to school and get a job and not come to the halls no more and at night I'm going to stay at home and not go out with the homeboys no more and do stupid things no more 'cause I want to make you happy mom and dad. I miss you.

Well Beat I got to go, but I will hit you up next time well stay up Beat it your boy...

- Babyboy

From The Beat: We can tell you care so much about your mom and dad. Still, your love for them will have to take action for you to stay out of the Hall. It's easier to stay you're not going to go out with the homeboys, but the hard part is actually doing it. We believe you can.

Give Me Hope

The things that gives me hope when I get angry and mad out of control is just to hop in my whip and dip around slappin' some Dre or some Pac or something.

While I listen to my slaps, I like to bust a little flow about what I'm going through. Or just let my sun roof and my windows down and dip thru the hood or something and be in the wind thinking about what I went threw and my future.

I'll go pick up my little brother and chief with him, talk about what we are going to do when we get big and famous. We get hyped up, go to the studio, spit on the computer and make a couple songs and put them on the MySpace.

-Yung Fayme

From The Beat: There is nothing to keep a person in line like creativity. Your life sounds really fun, so that is great encouragement to keep out of here.

What Gives You Hope?

My family gives me hope. I'm the only one in my generation that has been locked up. Most of my elders went to college and or to the Marines. There are all good at helping when it comes to tough situations. I can go to them for anything. Just a visit from my mom made my day. My mom really is the only person that knows me. Without my mom I probably wouldn't go to anyone.

-Lai

From The Beat: Sometimes being the only one who gets in trouble puts extra pressure on you to do better. Do you think this will help you since it isn't such a long legacy in your family?

Hope

When I feel down and need hope, I usually go to my home girl and I talk with her a lot on the phone or just text and stuff. She makes me laugh all the time and she says I make her laugh, too. I talk to her everyday, that's my daily routine to call her or she calls me and now that I'm locked up she's really the main person I miss and I'm sure she misses me, too. I think the reason we got along so well is cause our lives have a lot of things in common. She talks to me a lot about holes in her life and I talk to her a lot about holes in mine. She even tells me things I don't need to know. She's the only person that tells me things like that and she the only person I say things like that to and something about her just makes me happy.

- James

From The Beat: Having a friend that you can share anything with is really important. Often, love starts from this bond.

Thoughts On Life

I do believe my life is worth fighting for. I once believed that I just wanted to end my life because I was in a downward spiral. Just about every day I would think about how my life was and wanting it to end because of certain events. I felt there was no other way to deal with my problems. I never tried because something always told me that I needed to be here. I think I just wanted to live for my brother and the rest of my family. Right after the thought of death ran through my mind, my family followed right after. Every single time I wanted it to end, I got pulled back.

The reason I fight for my life now is my family. I know they would be devastated if I were gone. Being in the Hall made this even more of a reality. I see how much they love and care about me and I don't want them to become as depressed as I was if I ever took my life. That's why I fight to live, for my family. To keep them happy because I know I put a lot of joy in their hearts and keep them strong.

-Alex

From the Beat: We can tell you have such a strong connection with your family. You said being in the Hall made the fact that you live for your family even more of a reality. In a sense, through all the difficult times in the Hall, you have learned something. What else have you learned from being in here? How can you take what you have learned and bring even more joy to your family?

Loyalty to My Baby Girl

I have loyalty to one thing in my life, my babygirl.

People wonder why I have loyalty for her. She's been there for me in the ups and downs. I even put my hand on her face and she still won't let me go. I lost count of how many times I came to her with my neck full of haters, not counting the ones on my chest. Shocked that she won't let me go.

I must confess she once took the heat for me for a G-ride. Right now she's 7 months pregnant. I'm having a baby boy! People still wonder why I have loyalty for her. Shhh don't even get me started. My baby's name is going to be Edgar.

-Brownny

From The Beat: It's a great thing you're loyal to your girl—she sounds like she's always been loyal to you. But is she really the only one you're loyal to? Will you be loyal to Edgar? Hope so. Time is now to grow up!!

Mad at Myself

G-onda Beat? Well, I'm not felling these topics, because I'm really mad at my self, porque, I just got out on January 18, 2008. I did 11 months and got out of the ranch and I went to go kick it in my varrio and I went on the run that same day, because me avente unos pipasos and I smoke some yeska and I didn't want to go to the ranch again so I only lasted two weeks on the run.

I got caught February third, very early in the morning, but what really makes me mad and disappointed at myself is that every time I get out I don't try to stay out. Well, I sometimes try to but I end up doing wrong.

I went to court and they're trying to give me ranch all over again. But I refused it and that's what I'm gonna keep on doing until they give me life skills or APA, so I can't go on the run. Forget the ranch!

My next court day is soon. I'm trying to talk to my PO but he doesn't like me. But yeah, this vato has to go and to all, keep your heads up.

-Hestles

From The Beat: Being locked up again, maybe you can really spend some time and figure out what you need to do to change. It sounds like you already know which program you think will work for you. Good luck.

The person I am most loyal to is my little brother.

Finally a Letter for Me

Finally after two weeks I got me letter Beat. I don't know who it's from but dang I love it because, Beat, it feels good to get a letter from somebody. It means they took some time of their day for you and it feels good.

So anyway your boy gots to go so love, peace and chicken grease.

-Chango

From The Beat: If there is one message you sent to us this week, it's that one should never take love for granted. As you well know, that "somebody" didn't have to write you the letter. We're willing to bet that your deep appreciation for this seemingly small gesture is a reflection of your character and the reason this person took the time of day to reach out to you.

Loyal To You

She got me thinking of her eyes, I know she and I are down to ride.

She's my lady, soon to be my wife,

she's so cute too that she got me hypnotized.

These words she tells me got me fighting for my life.

Damn, I love those luscious lips, got me dreaming for a kiss,

got to love it by the way she moves her hips.

Me and my lady we stay together like water and a fish.

I love her so much, she got me asking for a touch,

her lips taste as good as chocolate fudge.

We got something bigger than the world entire,

when we make love, we're making fire. Love you

Manuela.

-Payasito

From The Beat: The best way to show her that you love her is to be with her and not in here. Is she enough motivation for you to stay out of here?

Loyalty

What loyalty means to me

No snitchin' no back stabbin'

When stuff gets deep there's

No running on you homeboys

Loyalty is your word you

Honor. Loyalty is trust to ride

So let it be known loyalty

lies within the palms

-Hitman

From The Beat: This is a solemn and unforgiving creed that you live by. Many have this degree of loyalty with family members, but how far do you extend this bond? Who is deserving of such strong loyalty in your life? Of those whom you are loyal to, are there situations where the right action compels you to be "disloyal"?

Loyalty To My Brother

The person I am most loyal to is my little brother. I have never stolen anything from him or anything like that and I would die for him. When I was hustlin' I bought him more stuff that I bought myself.

I hope when I get out I can be a better example for him but he's already followed his own path. It's a lot better than mine so I am not worried about him at all. That's how I would rather have him, not like me because I know that he will really make a difference.

-Juan

From The Beat: Your loyalty to your little brother is such a powerful thing. We can tell you love him very much and that you want to influence him in a more positive way. Your selfless view on your brother is beautiful but just as you say "he will really make a difference" we believe you can too. It's never too late to have a positive impact on this world.

SANTA CRUZ

My Thoughts On Lesbians And Gays

I don't think that there should be any hate, anger or whatever you call it, about sexual preference. Don't get me wrong, I'm not into any of that gay stuff, but I don't think there's anything wrong with it. If that person is in school and minding his own business, I don't think that a person who hates on lesbians or gays should go around beating them up for no apparent reason. But if that gay guy is trying to molest someone, I think he should be beat up. Until then, just leave them alone.

-Loner

From The Beat: Gays are no more likely to molest anyone than straights. But molestation is a crime to be dealt with by the law, not by vigilante action.

Praise My Name

Your desire to talk lies

behind my back

makes you a sham.

I creep out from the shadows

and you praise my name.

All I do is take out my hands from my pockets

and I say - help!

-Help me

From The Beat: And then what?

An Interview About Loyalty

The Beat: What comes to your mind when you think of loyalty?

Albert: My family- even with everything I do wrong, they stick by me. You can't trust any of your friends, only your family. I hurt my uncle's family, but still everyone is supportive of me.

The Beat: If they are so loyal to you, how should you be treating them?

Albert: Well, I should treat them good but it's hard because I get jealous of them. My uncle is a good dad for them. I don't have a dad in my life. He is a gang member and left us when I was a little kid. I did drugs to try to deal with my anger about that.

The Beat: How can you get through your anger so you can treat your family the way you know you should?

Albert: I need to go through counseling and do my program so I can go home and see my family again.

-Albert

From The Beat: There is a lot to be learned from this example of unconditional love and support. You are fortunate to have such a family - even without your father. Your feelings about his absence from your life are real and normal. We're sorry for the challenges his absence caused you and your family. You see now that lashing out in anger or turning to drugs only caused more pain. You know that your family deserves your loyalty too. Sounds like you know what to do to change this pattern and make your own family stronger in the future.

No title

As I was walking in the fog I tripped over a stone.
My tears were full of salt and sadness.
My tears told the history of my life.
My voice was as tiny as an atom.
And then I saw a crow flying toward the tide.
And I wrote in my diary about my long lost love.

-Edgar

From The Beat: Nature is a good place to think about our lives. And we live in one of the most beautiful places in the world. We'd all be better off if we spent more time with the crows and the fog and the tide. Keep walking, keep talking, keep thinking and cry when you feel like it. Your voice will grow.

The Real Fool

I go to school,
pop people that act like a fool.
When I pop them and they drool,
I smoke weed and act a fool.

Some people say
that I want to act cool
and still stay in school,
make money when still in school...

How you going to act, fool?

-Damien

From The Beat: You are talking about how people often say or do things that don't make sense. It sounds like you realize that we need to look at ourselves first, do the right thing, and not worry about what other people do. We can't control other people. Stay in school, stay off of the weed, don't act like a fool. You are only in control of yourself.

The Walk Away

I think it is best to walk away because it can cause less problems. If someone is saying harsh stuff to you, what are you going to do?

Well, first, if I say you are a dumbshhhh you should walk away.

If you respond by saying something back, you can cause a conflict.

You never know who is out there. They can be a bad person and kill you or hurt you if you say something back.

When you walk away, you might feel a little bit angry or you might feel like a bigger person for having just walked away.

-Juan

From The Beat: You are completely right. It takes a much bigger person to just walk away from a situation that might cause you trouble or harm.

On Loyalty

The person who has my whole heart so deeply that it makes me feel loyal is my girl. I feel so strong and attached to her because of the faithfulness she shows and the things I know. I don't have to go far in a short time. I just have to show my faithfulness through these days. Staying true tells of my love, respect, and kindness. She enriches my life by showing me the way she is- not by changing the way she was. She is loyal to me by being faithful. She shows love to me by doing anything I may need, but don't ask. She just does it.

-D

From The Beat: You are right- it's the day to day right decisions and acts of kindness that make the difference. It sounds like you have a wonderful person to go home to. Keep up your end each day and soon you will be able to show your gratitude in person.

Be Gay!

I think people are gonna' be who they are. As long as I don't get bothered then I don't care. Let people be what they want to be. That's all I can think of.

-Young and Open

From The Beat: People ARE going to be who they are. Everyone comes with different talents, ethnic backgrounds, interests, and experiences. Much of the suffering in the world is caused by misunderstandings and judgements made regarding these differences. You are right to say- "... don't get bothered - let people be..."

A Piece Of My Mind

Justice, yeah it's served while cops beat us down, take us downtown,

so the judge can send us ranch camp bound.

Pound to pound, what I always thought, living through the trouble to survive

in our struggle with the clock.

Who would have thought the world could be so cruel?

In our minds we prosper from the knowledge of the streets -

without the foundation of a school.

But arrogance rules a weak-minded fool. Take advantage of the system,
use it like a tool.

Come out on top. Just follow the rules.

-J

From The Beat: Hey, you've got it. You've seen through the ruse. It takes more than street smarts. Maybe though, those who haven't yet discovered this aren't 'arrogant', but ignorant. Your job is to spread the word.

Walking Away From Conflict

Yes, I have walked away when I was in a group home and the kids liked to talk shhhh. If you fight, you are almost guaranteed to get caught. Sometimes, I really wanted to beat some kids up, but I thought about my mom and family. I realized that getting into a fight would keep me from getting out and getting back to my family

-Shane

From The Beat: Being able to see the results of your actions before you do something will keep you out of trouble. Good thinking-ahead and putting the needs of your family first. You are showing a lot of maturity and compassion.

Girl

Such a sexy girl,
the girl of my dreams.

Her hair, it gleams.

Such a complex girl,
the object of my desire.

Can't cease to think about her,
can't seem to live without her.

My infatuation will not tire.

-In love

From The Beat: Better get yourself out of the can and back on track. A girl like that could tire of waiting for a fellow who can't keep his feet on the right path. Shape up.

On Our Actions Towards The Gay Community

Gay people are like everyone else, to me. As long as they don't try to hit on me then everything's cool. I don't have anything against gay people because we are all human. If you are gay, that's not your fault. Just be happy.

-Ruben

From The Beat: Being gay is not a fault or a flaw. No matter what our differences, racial, sexual, or anything else - we are all human. We are glad that you see things clearly.

Disappointing My Mom

I've messed up being back here again, Mom, and I'm
sorry.
It's because I made poor choices and was out of hand
and rowdy.
I pushed it too far, and now I'm facing six months in
camp.
Ignorin' you and going out in the streets with the
homies thinkin' I was a champ.
These are the consequences I got for being cruel to you.
Every single time I remind myself how I used to treat
you, I feel a fool.
But don't worry, Mom, when I get out, everything is
gonna change, that's a fact.
What I'm telling you, Mom, is coming from the heart, so
it's a wrap.
Thinkin' 'bout the things you said and I never listened.
Now I'm in here, mad as hell, and reminiscing.
Just to let you know, Mom, I'm sorry and I miss you.
Last but not least, Mom, I love you.

-Lil' Laylow

From The Beat: This is beautifully said, and we know you are sincere in every word. But it's so much easier to make these promises when you're locked up and lonely than to keep them when you are free and forget how much you were hurting (and how much you hurt the person you love the most). We hope you take this wonderful poem and tape it to your bedroom wall so that you will never forget, and so that you can be the son your mother loves so much.

Disappointment Is Hard On Family

Disappointment can be really hard on many different people, depending on the situation. For instance, if you're gangbanging, you may disappoint the homies by trying to listen to moms. An' vice versa... you may disappoint moms, trying to keep yo' homies happy. It all comes down to who you love more.

The family that you have will always be there for you, no matter what happens. Yo' homies will only be yo' homies when you're making them happy. If you go to jail, yo' moms will always think of you as a loving child, while the homies will just continue life without you. The only advice I can give you is to think about who will be affected more.

-Tb

From The Beat: We might never know if anyone reading this fine piece will understand how important what you've said is. But as long as you understand how important it is, that's really the most important thing. We often say that the role of a soldier (whether at war in Iraq or at war on the streets) is to take orders and give his/her life, only to be replaced by another soldier and soon forgotten. But the role of a son or brother is to be there for your family, to give and receive love, and never, never to be forgotten. You have your priorities right. Now, put them into practice.

Yes, I'm KP

Yes, I'm KP. Can't believe I'm out my cell
I get six extra hours to not be trapped in hell
I get to play ping-pong, chill, and watch TV
And all I gotta do is the duties of a unit KP
Wash the windows, wipe tables and make shower packs
Serve meals, collect trays, and pass out the fruits and
snacks
Walk by every cell, collect dirty clothes and I'm done

-Mistro

From The Beat: Even though we had to take out those last few lines (because it's too easy to hate on the weakest among you), it's till a tight little poem that gives us a good idea of why KP is so desirable. When you're at home, do you also do KP duty there, or is this something reserved for lock-up?

Untitled (By Choice)

You live in a world filled with hate
With people who create and live to take
With bullshhhh that's inked in fate
We look at the world and discriminate
But that, too, fades away
When you're gone you want to succeed
But you continue with your evil deed
We live in a world of gangs and drugs
Not knowing, we just fight for the right
To survive, to hold our heads up high
We either lose or win
But we did it for the religion we are in
We cry at night hopin' to die
And we wonder why
Things happen to a young girl like us
That's why we fought as we were brought up
But people don't understand the things we do
To be who we are, the things we are taught to learn
We don't expect our piece of the world
Our life is on edge to break down and to fall
To stand to be the man
As we stand to create a new band
To sell drugs like many we understand
What we need is all we ask
You will never change a person
A person will change themselves
We're just crazy people
And it brings us to juvenile
Because we fight, we steal, we lie, we fear

-Kayes

From The Beat: We're not sure why you chose to leave this fine poem untitled, but what you've written is important. If the system cannot change anyone, what does it take for a person to change him or herself? If most people in the hall are doing the things they're taught, then how to people overcome those early childhood lessons, and learn a new way of thinking and acting? What would help you the most to rise above your circumstances and leave this episode of your life behind you?

Clean Up For Your County Rather Than Yo' Mama

When they say to clean up in here, and would you do the same out there? Yes, I would clean up in here and out there, because I like to be a clean person, not no dirty person. And when they say, "Would you clean up in here and out there? It doesn't just mean that clean at your house, it means to clean up on the streets and any other place that you are at.

Then, when my mom tells me to clean up my room, I rush straight to my room and clean it. The last time I helped my mom clean the house is the last time I was on the outs. When I'm sleeping over my cousin' or friend's house, then I just wash their dishes without asking them and then their mother thanked me for washing their dishes.

I would love them to put me on the clean up crew in juvenile hall, because if you help, they might take some days off for the time you are serving. When I was with the clean up crew, I just help the staff clean up the unit and the bathrooms in the unit.

-Lil' Rich

From The Beat: Even though many people, young and old, don't see why it's so important to keep their environments clean (whether it's in here, at home, or on the streets we inhabit), we do think it's important. Not only does it make for a better place to live, but it also sets an example for others and builds character in ourselves. If you clean up at your friends' or cousins' houses without being asked, then you show that your parents have given you good values that can only help you in life. We hope you get selected for the clean up crew here, but even more, we hope that you get to be an example out there.

Good Reasons For Cell Phones

My life with a cell phone does cost lots and lots of money. It also depends on what phone company you use. Usually my phone bill is about \$100 a month, but if you lose your phone or go over minutes, go over texting, or buy stuff on your phone, it costs more money.

But, also, cell phones can make you a lot of money, such as if you are selling something and you need/want someone to call you, you're going to have to have a cell phone. You can't stay at home and wait for a phone call. Or if you leave your house, what if you miss an important phone call?

But don't think it's a wrong/bad thing to have a cell phone. Your parents want to know where you're going if you're leaving the house. Or what if you get in trouble and you need to call 911, or your parents for help? There's a lot of good reasons to have a cell phone.

-Big Boy

From The Beat: We like this piece because you took it seriously, giving us the disadvantages (cost) and advantages (convenience) of cell phones. The one thing that could have made this piece even stronger, though, is an example of one or both of those things. If you think back, you might have started a new paragraph with the words, "I remember one time when..." Those examples let us know exactly what you're describing.

Dedicated To My Mother

Jefita, every time I look into your eyes, I see pain and suffering. I know I have caused you a lot of pain. I just wish all the pain would go away, knowing that your two oldest sons are in the system, one doing 120 days, the other one sentenced to camp. You having to work all day, having to take care of five kids, being a single parent.

I'm sorry for all the pain I have caused you. All I have cared about is my crazy life. Not thinking about my future, just thinking about my past. Well, I love you to death, Jefita. I would give my life for you.

-Shadow

From The Beat: Giving your life is the one thing your jefita never wants you to do, Shadow! She wants you to give up the life that has led you away from her. She wants you alive and with her, where you belong, and where you want to be. You have written a powerful tribute of love to your mom; now live the words that you have written. Live them for her, and for yourself.

In My Room

All this time in my room, getting locked up like animals, watching people looking at us like if we were in a zoo. Thinking in my room what I do wrong, trying to do right, but ending up doing wrong. The judge saying, "You're a danger to humanity."

Looking at time go by, but we just look up, see the sky, but not seeing no future for us, because our past. In my room, thinking, "Should I change?" or, "Why should I change if I see no hope in me?" All, in the end, thinking all of this in my room.

Seeing my mom once a week, pretending like nothing's wrong, wanting to just leave with her and never come back. I want to grow wings and just fly away. But all this comes when I'm in my room.

-Shadow

From The Beat: You may see no future, Shadow, but we do see a future. The pain you're feeling reflects a heart, and the words that you write reflect a brain. Not everybody is so blessed with two such important gifts in life, which is why we see a future for you even when you doubt. Are you a danger to humanity? We can't believe that, because you and your mom are both a part of humanity, and you must live so that she — and all of us — can benefit from your own humanity. You can't fly away from this place or from your life. What you can do, though, is live it every day for that future you want for yourself, and not risk losing everything (and hurting your mom even more).

Apology To My Family

My whole family has done everything in their power to guide me into being the best person I can be, my whole life. Now what did I do? I got arrested and brought shame to my whole family. When my family comes to visit me, I can't look at them in the eye without breaking down in tears. I can't even call my parents without having to shield my tears from the rest of my unit.

What have I become? I don't even recognize myself any more. But what eats me up the most is thinking about what my family is going through at the very moment, and the fact that I'm not there to help them. Every night in my room, I pray for my family and beg for their forgiveness.

Whatever people might say on the outside, being locked up is horrible. My motto is, "Each day is another day towards freedom," and seeing my family again is the drive that keeps me going in this place. The mental image in my mind of my family is another thing that makes me keep ticking in this place. Otherwise, I wouldn't even try in school or be respectful to the staff.

The thought of my family is my power. I love my family and family is everything.

-Guilty

From The Beat: Oh, Nick, you are not the only one who is breaking down in tears. When we read this powerful expression of love, we find the water springing to our own eyes. You ask what you have become, and our answer is that you are in the process of becoming a responsible and caring adult. That means that you understand that the words you express must be backed with actions that return the love you have been so blessed to receive. It also means that you are willing to sacrifice some of the things you love doing for the love of family, as they have sacrificed for you. Of course you must show this wonderful piece of writing to your entire family. And then you must live out the implied promises that are clear in every word. Shield your eyes, if you choose, but never shield your heart!

Slangin' Yolla

Selling the coke is a dangerous business. It's not a drug that attracts laid-back customers, unlike weed. Coke addicts will kill you for a dub of that candy. Cokeheads are often addicted and depressed when they run out of it. They'll jump you, pull a gun on you, whatever they have to do to support their habit. It's the addiction talking. They'll spend all their money on the yolla, and sniff it up in a minute.

I was careful. I only sold to my friends and eventually, they would recip. But now I'm locked up and can't sell any more. I never want to touch drugs again.

-Justin

From The Beat: You say you were careful, but even being careful, here you are! So, the moral of this story is the only way to be careful is not to sell drugs at all, which is what you have already concluded. We hope you keep this promise. Your future depends on it.

I Am Lost

I am lost.

Either in reality or in the confines of my fragmented mind.

What is lost?

Lost is being in a constant state of confusion. Not aware of what's going on.

I am lost.

I can no longer comprehend reality, or maybe I am refusing to conform to it.

I don't think I'm the only one like this.

The reality we live in now is destructive, hateful, and possibly hopeless.

Nobody cares any more. This is not to be taken as a generalization, but as a warning.

We as a people can't continue doing what we are doing, or else it will only lead to our own demise.

I would hate to see it happen, but if we don't change, it will.

Do these ponderings make me lost?

-KG

From The Beat: Confused? Oh, yes. Lost? Absolutely not! The lost don't ponder such deep concerns, don't express fear for all people, for the demise of society itself. We could never conclude that one expressing the doubts and fears you express is lost. Instead, we see someone searching in a dark world. That makes you more poet, more philosopher, more deeply human! Confused? Oh, yes. Lost? Absolutely not!

Disappointment, But There's Always Better Days

Disappointment is something I deal with on a regular basis. There's a lot of feelings that come to me when I think, "disappointment." 'cause it can make me feel very different things. It can make me strong, weaker, wiser or angry. Also it can make me get real thoughtful about things — things such as why I feel disappointed or how I can use that anger or sadness to my advantage, to better myself.

Disappointment will always be. It's all about how you deal with it. And when you feel so disappointed that you feel there's no way out, except that for what it is and move on. Make things better. There's always better days. God bless.

-Cesar

From The Beat: Well, Cesar, we wish you had filled in some of the blanks for us. For example, how can you use anger or sadness to better yourself. Are you using your situation right now to your advantage? In what ways?

Life Before Cell Phones

Having a cell phone is really important to me

Having a cell phone can reach the other person you need to call

Having a cell phone can help you talk to girls

Having a cell phone can set a date

Having a cell phone can call for a job set up

Having a cell phone to call for emergency

Having a cell phone can get you somewhere when you're lost

Having a cell phone is very important when you're in a situation, you can all your friends, cousins, families, for help

Having a cell phone is really important when you get a job

Having a cell phone is very important in this world

Having a cell phone is very important because you can call your girls, brothers, sisters, your boys, call your people you need

Having a cell phone is very important because you can text message in a certain situation

-C-Lilo

From The Beat: What do you think life was like before there were cell phones? How did people talk to their friends and families, get jobs, talk to girls, get appointments, etc? Do you think life was that much harder then than now?

Back Then

I remember when I was little eating lots of Skittles

They are very sweet and chewy

Once in your mouth, it's very goeey

Me and my friend, Stewy

Met this man named Huey

He introduced us to drugs

Which made us feel like bugs

We both look at each other and he shrugs

At the time it was exciting and fun

Went home and my dad said, "Look, son

Everything you've been through, I've done"

I was feeling kind of dizzy

My mom and dad were very busy

When on the drugs it made my head feel frizzy

When not on drugs, people looked at me like a sissy

I look back, and that's what keeps me on track

Now I don't want to come back

-Lil' Chapa

From The Beat: What is it that keeps you on track? Looking back? At what? Does this mean you plan not to use drugs again? We hope so, because it doesn't matter at all how people look at you or what they call you, but it does matter what you do to your body and your mind. Besides your life, your freedom is the most important gift you have. Treat it like the treasure that it is.

Writing How I Feel Helps Me

Disappointment is something that I find hard to deal with, because when something does not work my way, I get angry and lose control of myself. I handle my anger in many different ways, but lately I have learned how to release my anger in a way that I don't harm myself or others.

The best way I think I can deal with my anger is about writing how I feel. My mom was disappointed at me because I got locked up again. I always have someone disappointed in me, even though I try to make some people proud of me.

-Wayo

From The Beat: If you have found writing to be a good way to release your anger and your frustrations, we suggest that you write something directly to your mother, explaining that you understand why she is disappointed in you, and why you're disappointed in yourself. You've learned that you can control your anger (because you're doing it in here), so you have to apply that important lesson when you are out there again, making your own choices. Don't stop writing just because there's no special "program" for you to write on the outs. Writing is something you can always do wherever you are, and we've always found it an excellent strategy for dealing with stress, anger and frustration.

Washin' Me Like Dirty Dishes

Just went to court and it's not lookin' good. I refused Fount Springs and now they tryin' to wash me and give me a year here. I feel a year here will do no good for me to prepare me for the outs. But it seems like there's no choice. My PO's tryin' to play me and the system.

-Italiano

From The Beat: Okay, then, if not Fount Springs and not the hall, what will do you the most good to prepare yourself for the outs?

That's Disappointment

Disappointment is a big thing in life, 'cause when you have a girlfriend and a loving mother or your older brother who cares for you and want you to do good and always told you to stay in school and quit smoking, but you don't — that's disappointment. Or your moms say your friend can't stay the night, take him home and come right back and you don't — that's disappointment. Or your brothers and sisters look out for you, telling you to do good and stay out of trouble, then two weeks later, you' locked up — that's disappointment. Or, say, your girlfriend's like, "You on probation, so be cool. Don't smoke," and you smoke — that's disappointment.

-Marcel

From The Beat: When we read this, we see how much support you have in your life, and we wonder if you know how lucky you are. A loving mother, a caring older brother, other brothers and sisters, a girlfriend, all in your corner trying to keep you safe and free. So yes, you've disappointed all these people, but more important, you've disappointed yourself. So tell us, what is your plan for turning this around, for making them and you proud of yourself? "Plan" is the most important word in that question because if you don't have a plan, you can be sure that someone else will make a plan for you.

Untouchable

I'm SF's finest; I'm a super hero without a cape

Boy, my life was made

I was steady gettin' paid

Until I got caught

'Cause now I'm on a road that's pretty tough

My heart is full of hate

I used to be pushin' weight

I'm trapped behind a gate

I'm torn like a piece of bait

All you gotta have is faith

'Cause your life don't evolve around

Selling eights

-Palou

From The Beat: If you've really learned the lessons of the life you were leading (and where it's led you), then maybe it's all worth it. It's better that you understand now where your choices were leading you than that you keep moving on that path, only to find yourself in a far worse place than you are now. One thing's for sure: nobody is untouchable! The fast lane is where the accidents happen. Slow and steady wins the race.

Living The Double Life

What's good, Beat? This be yo' homie from San Mateo County.

Ever since a youngsta,

I was gang related in the streets as a mugsta.

I was affiliated at a very young age.

But I was down for mine, living that double life, trying to do good for the familia,

Having my struggles, my barrio, my bandanna,

Keeping my head held high,

Hoping my Baby Boo ain't got someone on the outside.

But what's the chance that it ain't crackin'?

If I was out and she was in, I'd probably be mackin'.

But it's time to stop that double life and just drift away

On a memory.

-Rambo

From The Beat: We always admire you for what you write, Rambo, (even when you try to slip your turf into your piece...) You have an honesty that is not easy to find, like recognizing that if you were out and your girl was in, you probably wouldn't be faithful to her, and so you know what's real. But what's really real is that if you don't make that choice for your own future (but choose the future of your gang instead), then you will certainly drift away... and become only a memory to those that you love the most.

Life Is Faster In The Streets

I like the cell phone, one because cell phones did change a lot of things in life. Some things that phones changed were, you can leave the house and not miss a phone call or look for a public phone to make a call. Cell phones have not created problems for me. Yes, it has made life faster in the streets. I have never lost a phone and I chose the Mobile Phone Company. I use it because it is the cheapest.

-Oc

From The Beat: When you write in The Beat, OC, you don't have to answer all the questions we ask in the topic sheet. Just write about the topic in any way you choose, whether you answer our questions or others.

All That I'm Thinkin'

Back up in this hellhole, like it's nothin'. PO played me and hit me with eight violations, like a punk jerk. Every day I be stressin' and thinkin', thinkin' 'bout my crazy-ass life and how I hurt the people I love every time I be up in here. Thinkin' about my homies doing their thug thang and wondering about the shhh I would be doing if I were on the outs. Will being up in here open my eyes? Will I stop hurting the ones I love? I don't know, man, you feel me? Only time will tell, but right now all I'm thinkin' about is getting out and getting on my G.

-J's Mah

From The Beat: Will you stop hurting the ones that you love? The answer can only be that when you love those that you are hurting more than you love the things you are doing (in other words, more than yourself), you will just keep doing them. If hurting those that have sacrificed so much for you is not enough to make you open your eyes and take responsibility for how you are affecting them, then what will it take?

January 4

It happened on January 4
I met this guy, I knew him right away
It's funny how he understood, all I had to say
He listened to my "suenos" (dreams)
He listened to my problems
We talked about love and our "vidas" (lives)
He's been there, too, it seems

I never once felt judged by him
He knew just how I felt
He seemed to accept me
And all that I went through
He didn't interrupt me
Or need to have his say
He listened to me very patiently
And never went away
I wanted him to understand
How much this meant to me
So I just did the same
That he did to me
Listened very patiently
I hugged him very tight
So he could never go away
Now he's mine
What more can I say?
He writes me every day
To tell me what I'm about
I'm not that in love yet, but just about
What can I say? That's my baby
So just don't hate, so what if you had him?
That's why kook where he at now

Late, that's all I had to say

-Janet

From The Beat: If you have someone who writes you regularly and gives you strong encouragement, then you're very lucky. Don't worry about what anyone else says. Focus on you, and find a way to stay out of here when you touch down so that you can be together with this special person.

Living Double Life, Dog

In this life I live, it's a cold game...
You got to know who your real dogs are
An' who ain't...
Nobody don't care about when you locked
An' you ain't got shhh to give...
But they love you when you' out there...
In this street, real ninjas at a all-time low
Man, this street, dog
You gave a ninja too much rope
A ninja start thinking he a cowboy, dog

-Ju

From The Beat: We think it's more important for you to be your own "real dog" than to know who's real and who's fake. You have to want something better than this for you life because the street life will just keep leading you back, or worse.

X2

Again I am lost
Now I have to pay the cost
I should've stayed cool
'Cause now I look like a fool
Got nowhere to run
I shouldn't have brought the gun
I feel like my life is done
Sittin' in a cell ain't nowhere close to fun
I should've thought twice
Before I gambled with my life
Like a game of dice
I just want to go home
Instead of sleepin' on a bed made out of foam
I broke all my bridges
Now I keep gettin' stuck in ditches
What's next to expect?
'Cause all I keep gettin' is rejects
I sold my last bag to a knock
All I could remember is the gun gettin' cocked

-Palou

From The Beat: Life's too short to spend it with "should've" and "could've" and "would've." It's time for you to take control of your life and stop handing it over to strangers holding you in a cell. You can't keep doing what you've been doing without giving up that control, over and over again. When will you become the master of your fate?

I Need To Keep My Family Happy

I live a double life. I do what I do, but I try to keep my family happy. I know in here they aren't happy, but this double life I'm going to need to change. To me, my family means the most, so when I get out I'm going to stay out and keep them happy.

-G-Thang

From The Beat: We sure hope you keep the promise you make in this piece, but by signing your name "G-Thang" it's hard to see how you're going to stay out of here, which is the thing you need to do if you're going to keep your family happy.

Speak My Mind

Why do it always got to be so hard? Well, let me just say I ain't that mad. I got eight more days, but why does it make me feel sad? I mean, I'm going back to home, shouldn't I be glad?

I just hate it in here! Every time we get deeper, I see my lil' homies and my older ones. It's just so hard. I don't want to see them in here. I want to see them out there. I know they made mistakes, I mean, so did I, right? But don't we deserve chances?

I'm not mad. I can't judge them. But they're so small, and this place ain't right for them. Look at my older homie. He gets out in October. Been here so long I can't even remember. I got staff telling me I'm a bad influence! It ain't my fault that girls want to follow. I really wish they could just be real. I got fake ones, too, and I'm for reals.

Something I know for sure, though, and I got to speak it out. Homies, hear me out.

Don't disrespect, just be about. What you think, my girl didn't tell me? You're better than that, homies.

Don't call us no RIPS, or you already know whatever else you said? Don't hate 'cause when I get out I finna be out and about. It ain't even about that. But like I told you, just got to speak it out. So what if I'm walking the way you walk? I just wanna laugh. I mean, come on. I'm in jail, just trying to have fun. I know you may not understand, but, hey, I'm a homegirl, and I don't need to explain. I mean, if I show you' respect, can't I get it back? Don't even get mad. It wasn't that bad.

Well, let's just say this all a game. If you guys want, just play away. Remember, homies, stay up and if you fall down, just smile and turn around. And if you feel like smashing, just walk away. Look like a punk, but, come on, you know they'll pay.

There's a place and time for everything, but today's not that day. Remember, only strongest survive, and I'm out. Just had to speak my mind.

Much love to the homies. Take care of yourselves. I'm out.

-Janet

From The Beat: We can see throughout this piece that you may have intended it as a poem, but since you wrote it without any line breaks, we found it too difficult to do it for you. (So next time, if you want to write a poem, break your lines the way you want them.) As for your message, we wonder why it matters whether or not you are a negative influence on others when you should be focused on being a positive influence on yourself. Forget what "they" say about you, and look carefully at your own actions and what you say about yourself. You call yourself a "homegirl," but that doesn't tell us what you want out of life, and how you plan to achieve it. One thing is clear: you aren't getting the things you want by allowing yourself to be just another juvenile in the system. That old notion that "only the strong survive" is easy to misunderstand. It doesn't mean those with the biggest weapons, or those who can beat their enemies. No, it means those who survive are the strongest. The measure of your strength is how well you survive.

The Best Family In The World

I love you, family, with all my heart. Every time that they say my family name, I go crazy, because I am sad because I miss them. My family is all my life, but I can't be with them because I'm here in the room of hell.

I'm going crazy just thinking of how I hurt my best family in the world, getting locked up again. But it nothing to a G. I'll be with my family soon, because God is help me. I love my family with all my good heart. One day I would be home to my best family in the world.

-Adrian

From The Beat: If getting locked up is "nothing to a G," then what is it to the family of a G? As long as you think of getting locked up as "nothing," then you will not be able to honor your love for your family by doing the one thing they want — for you to be home with them. We hope you think carefully about your choices, because you can't be the G you say you are without continuing to hurt your family.

My Last Time, For Real

Doin' time to me is just a waste of my life. I miss out on hella stuff and don't get memories that I want to tell people when I'm older. It's not hard for the most part in here, it's just boring and not fun.

When I look back on my days on the outs, I cherish those memories, 'cause it reminds me that there is more to life than bein' in these walls. I know I say I ain't comin' back all the time, but this time it's official... I'm not, 'cause I'ma be eighteen when I leave, so my mistakes will lead to real time behind walls and not just a bump in the road.

-Mejia

From The Beat: We hope (and we know you hope) that you never have to experience the next bump the system has for you in the road ahead. You know what it is that leads you here, so you also know what it is that you have to stop doing in order not to be led to a worse place than this. For real, Mejia, take back control of your own life and your own choices. You're too smart to be the kind of fool that takes his freedom for granted.

Disappointment In Life

Why I'm like this? I ask myself, "Why do things like this happen to me? Why? Why? Why?" If only I would've done things the right way, I would've never ended up here in the place that I said I was never coming back to.

My mom so sad and feeling so bad. "Why does my son keep on hurting me? What did I do wrong?" So many questions and not so many answers to all these problems. "Disappointment," I say to myself, is all I am.

-Dro

From The Beat: We can't believe that disappointment is all that you are, 'Dro. We are all much more than our worst mistakes, and you are much more, too. If you spend too much time on the past, living in an "if only" world, then you won't have time to put your focus where it will do some good, on your future. If you are disappointed in yourself, then when you get out, make small steps to improve. Take just one or two things that you have not done, and start doing them. (Maybe like going to school, or making sure you are home by an early hour.) If you do these things and succeed, other things will follow. Don't beat yourself up for your failures; build yourself up for your successes.

Girls

I put all my time into this girl

Forgot about my life and thought she was my world
I thought she was true and thought I was gonna be with her for life
I didn't know what to expect, 'cause she was so kind and nice
When she spoiled me, I thought she did it 'cause she loved me

But I guess it just wasn't meant to be
I loved this girl to death, an' still do
I treated her with respect, 'cause she was my boo
I cheated on her once, an' a lot of other shhhh
Maybe that's the reason why thing got like this
I went to jail, 'cause I hit someone with a weapon
The reason I'm here is 'cause I listened to her
She told me to hit him an' I listened to her
She wrote to me a couple days after I got locked up
I was hella happy to hear from her
A month went by an' I'm still here

Haven't heard a word from her, an' it brings a tear
Now I just sit in my cell an' realize I pro'ly just got played
I have her name tatted on me, which, I hope to get removed one day
I tell you this, never trust no female
No matter who they are, 'cause you never know
When you can get played

-Ray

From The Beat: Just because one female has used you and discarded you, do you think it's fair to conclude that all females are untrustworthy? After all, you admitted that you cheated on her. Does that make all males untrustworthy, too? The real lesson to be learned is that you have to take responsibility for your actions. Whether she told you to do it or not, you're the one that did it, and you're the one living with the consequences. (Just like, if she told you to jump off a roof and you did, you'd be the one with the broken bones...)

Pain

The sun rises and sets at the least
I used to carry the pistol, considering myself a beast
What am I supposed to do?

Sittin' in a place where you barely get any food

My life is cruel

But I put myself in this dynamic duel

I used to be a fool of love

But now all my life is put to the one above

My life is hard to explain

Lookin' at me, you could tell my heart is full of pain

-Palou

From The Beat: Life is never easy, Palou, but it's especially difficult for the young and even more, for those who have to hustle for what they have. But still, if you recognize how you got to where you are, then you'll also see what you must do (or not do) to move beyond where you are. And beyond the pain you now feel. Don't give up on yourself.

Disappointment

The way I deal with disappointment is knowing that you were the only one who put yourself in the situation. When there is a situation that doesn't work my way, I get frustrated and angry. The way I handle it is to think about what I have done and just to be the man and take the consequences.

A time I was disappointed was when I had to come to jail for nothing, really, and this week I'm disappointed again, because I think I shouldn't be here again.

-Francisco

From The Beat: You say you think you shouldn't be here again, but does that mean you didn't do what they say you did, or that you don't think what you did should lead to jail? If that's what you're trying to say, then how are you "being a man" and taking the consequences? If you know that certain behavior leads to certain consequences that you don't like, then you either have to stop doing whatever it is, or be willing to "be here" or whatever else those things lead to.

To Erica

Take a chance on me, and that's all I will rep, and don't worry, 'cause, baby, I got you, 'cause you're the only girl in this shady world who ever stayed by my side. For you I'll ride 'til I die, forget about my past, 'cause you got me here, confessing to you my feelings and letting you treat me like your puppet.

Remember that night when I straight up sneaked inside your house, late, telling you I love you without a doubt? We didn't have your dad's approval, so we weren't allowed to get along, but we stay strong, hoping things will change, getting to any kind of trouble. But his opinion never changed.

You told me I was your one and only, that I was the first vato you ever messed around with, but I still believe you're the one for me. You were always there when I was torcido (in jail,) when I had a family fight, or a loss of a family member or a homie. You always was a firme lady. You never did me wrong. You were my lady, my best friend, and my family. I always told you the truth. I was a firme vato, 'cause you were the only jaina to earn my respect.

So if you can find it in your heart to give me one more chance...

-Shadow

From The Beat: And if she gives you that one more chance, then what? What are the demands that love places on you? Can you be that "firme vato" and do the things that allow the system to take you from her? If so, what is her responsibility? To sit and wait? To give up the pleasures of being a young woman because her young man put other things ahead of her? We believe you, Shadow, when you express this deep love, but we wonder what you think love demands.

Behind The Walls

Every time I'm behind these walls, something inside of me tells me, "Don't come back, change your ways." But the other side, which is my pride, doesn't care. But after I make up my mind to change, once I get released, it all changes. I just want to do what I want when I want it done. When I come back, all I do is ask myself, "Is there a way out? How can I change from something bad to a good person?"

I hear everybody tell me, "You can do better. You should try to change," but they don't know what I go through. They don't know how hard it is to be in my shoes. But it all changes when I'm behind these walls, so there is nothing to do but see what happens.

-Shadow

From The Beat: No, Shadow, there is more to do than just wait to see what happens. Not everybody is blessed with the gifts of birth that you have, though you may not recognize them. It is so obvious that you are a probing mind, a brain that allows you to think and to analyze. And that is what you must do. Look deeply into your life and trace the path that your choices are likely to lead to. You have such abilities; use them! It may be hard for you to "do better," as those that care for you urge. But if you track where not doing better leads, you'll see that it's infinitely harder for you in the long run. That "long run" is the concern of adults, where children think only of the short run. You have the power within you to think like an adult, and then to act like one. Use it!

How I'm Livin'

I'm livin' in a cell with a roommate, just stories to tell to make time pass by quick.

I been here since January and I'm stressing, hoping I go home one day.

I'm heading to Camp Glenwood in a couple of weeks. The good thing is I'ma get home passes if I do good. I know that on my first home pass I won't feel like going back to camp, but I have to, so that I could graduate as soon as possible so I could move on.

When I do get out, I'ma take drug programs, 'cause drugs is what got me here. I'ma get a job, pay my restitution, help my parents, take care of 'em and their needs, and get off probation as soon as possible, and keep it cool. Until then, this is how I'm livin'.

-Unknown (By Choice)

From The Beat: We don't know why you'd choose to be "Unknown" because this is a very good piece of thinking and of writing. We know what a temptation it must be when you're on a home pass not to go back, but you know exactly where that leads if you give into that kind of temptation (and the many other temptations that are out there for you). Every one of your goals is an excellent one, and you can achieve all of them if you follow your own great advice to "keep it cool." Good luck.

I Am Who I Am

I'm brown and I'm proud
I am Chicano, and I say it out loud.

With my fist in the air
Talking about "I don't care."
Cops talking about, "Beware!"

It ain't fair
I don't care
I'm the one trying to break the chain
But I'm in here going insane

-Exithrilla

From The Beat: Does your pride in being a Chicano carry with it some responsibility to be a positive role model? Is it enough to put your fist in the air if you are doing things that allow others to judge you (and, by extension, your raza) in a negative light? What is the chain you're trying to break, and what are you doing to break it?

Zero

Blunt in my left, gun in my right
I used to be as high as a kite
Now my life is stuck
But I still remember being tucked
Life is tough
Especially when you sittin' in the back of a cop car cuffed
I been down that road
It don't lead nowhere but to a room that's cold
It was money on my mind
Paper all the time
Until I messed up and crossed the line
I used to be ridin' around the city in a stolo whip
But now if you fight you end up getting dipped
I used to be a diploma-led
But now I'm forced to get my GED

-Palou

From The Beat: There's nothing wrong with getting your GED, Palou. But there are things wrong with the reasons you have to get your GED instead of getting a high school diploma. Stop chasing money and chase your education instead. Money will follow. Stop stealing cars (they could be ours!), and when you earn the money to buy your own, you'll find it's much, much more satisfying.

My World

Lost in a world of time
Living life full of crimes
Doing time and time
Crime after crime
Nothing to live for
But things to die for
No love means no worries
No tears and no fears
Beers and smoke
Metal doors and metal beds
Dickies and Cortezes
Jokers and clowns

-Casper

From The Beat: You write as if you have no tomorrow/A surrender that fills us with sorrow/Life itself is a reason to live/Love will come if love you give/Death will come to one and all/To those who stand and those who fall/Beyond that, your future's not written/Though it may seem so from where you're sittin'/The journey is all, though the end is known/Let it unfold before you, at least 'til you're grown!

Bein' Locked Up... Again

Being locked up is shady. Every time I say I'm not coming back, I come back. I got all these females trippin', because I ain't home. Then moms and grams trippin' because I keep messing up.

I wish I could go back in time and do things different. My life is something special and I'm wastin' time in here. I need to be gettin' that money and stayin' focused on the prize. I'm finna be eighteen and this juvenile hall shhh ain't goin' right. They be playin' us with our letters and they think they the shhh, just because they got authority. But it's good. I ain't doin' long.

-Mookie

From The Beat: Time is the one thing you can't go back and do differently. You can only go forward and not repeat the mistakes you've made. What is "the prize" you need to stay focused on? If it's money, then you're focused on the wrong thing, and you're liable to lose everything (which, tragically, also means your moms and grams will also lose everything, because you are their everything). The truth is, whether "they think they the shhh" or not, they DO have authority, and it's authority you have given them. At eighteen, it's time to take back the authority over your own life, and to start exercising good judgment. You owe it to your moms, to your grams, and to yourself!

On One

When I'm on one, my brain feels funny
People start calling me, "Sonny"
It made me look like a bunny
But nothing is sweeter than honey
When I'm on one, I have a different personality
But, hey! It is reality
I am like the energizer battery
There is this one category
And it is my family
Which I love and adore
I never get tired, but I do get sore
Missing the time I went to the shore
But, guess what? I was on one

-Lil' Chapa

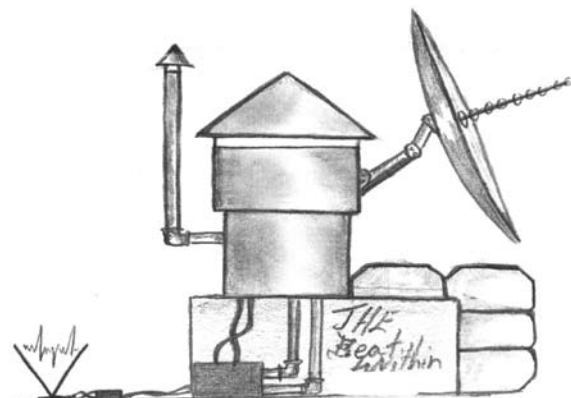
From The Beat: Sometimes, life is about making difficult choices/Like between the respect of family or hearing those funny voices/There's always the chance that one time when you're "on one"/That you'll never come back, it's over, and then you're gone, son.

How Is It?

When I am free
I smoke a lot of trees (weed)
Never do any good deeds
I'm always in need
But I'm always asleep
My pager beeps
It never gives me the creeps
'Cause my eyes stay puffy
Like sheep's
Anyways, I'm always deep
In case they try to creep

-Lil' Chapa

From The Beat: What about now, are you asleep or awake/'Cause you've got some serious decisions to make/All those trees you've been smokin'/Freeze your brain and cause your lungs to be chokin'/By letting your senses stay drowsy/You've let the system put you some place that's lousy/But you can't point your finger at them/When all you can think about is bud, leaf and stem/Take a hold of yourself before it's all broke/And you see that your whole life has gone up in smoke!



Knowledge

"A man is he who fights to prevail in every situation, every predication never oblivious to the most important element of security and that's the fight to live. He doesn't use ignorance to secure his status. Both his doom and survival is the devil and God of his knowledge."

To "know" is the data limitlessly taught in our public schools systematically designed as a test to hinder time advancement provoked by the fearful thoughts of a man, refusing to breed a competitive institute of brilliant minds that'll hold the power to reject an inflicted "imperialism".

Society's greatest weakness is, "not believing that in which we can't see." Destruction is plotted in our very gardens, a cemetery of rodeo conceived from the seeds of "evil and deception". Eye enticing distractions is what keeps us from preparing against those negative forces that demands an equal struggle to prevail...

The poisonous foods that we devour in desire is our clock snatcher an our weakness for temptation is the murder that steals our health. The restriction of your rights to carry firearms tender your potential victim for those who do and our addiction for life's substances and materials has replaced the chains the slave master used in his power to store order. A man's poverty and misfortune test his lawfulness and the society that punishes him for his crimes become an enemy in his eyes. Instigation has a domino effect, trickling from the top, perception and believe has given you an illusive mind frame, Uncle Sam told you that, "death is around the corner and now Freddy has committed another murder on Elm Street. I guess you can say, ignorance has claimed his blindness."

Everyday is a civil warfare where one finds his/herself in a constant struggle fighting against both visible and invisible with one eye, having homicidal thoughts with my open eye, but wanting to save the world with my third eye. Sometimes I wonder, "will I have a chance to see this world change before I die?" In the end I guess you can say, "all I need in time".

It's important for us not to become too comfortable in a

Our next writer doesn't need much of an introduction. He's been dropping back to back pieces in the past few issues and wants to share some knowledge and game with you readers. He's been locked down for a couple years and is ready to come home and enjoy freedom how it should be enjoyed. E-money is kicking some game from the CSP in Represa, CA, for all the readers out there, so listen up!

world we really can't call home. A home is supposed to be forever, relaxed and free of worry, not forever under attack. They say, "What goes around comes around," could it be possible America would one day become Iraq? You should watch what seeds you plant. For all of them don't grow straight. Some will grow with a slant.

It is said, "If you stay ready you don't have to get ready." The unexpected is only a surprise to those who not expecting. Pain isn't so dramatic to those who know the sun must make way for the clouds and beauty is only a condition of the mind. Taste buds comes in many different flavors and "equality" don't know he who "discriminated". This "truth" can never hide from time and "insane" is he who expects a different result from the same actions. "Hatred" will make a man kill another man and "love" promotes beauty in life. To "know" is to "see". A blind man walks down dark roads headed for destruction wishing to find water in hell...

I'm spreading this germ like a disease hoping to infect poisonous minds with a knowledge that'll expose revelations. There's a lesson in every man's mistake and you should not walk the next man's path if you can't deal with the hurt of that man's pain. To listen is golden data that'll make a man mentally rich, and to exercise the use of that data brings upon financial success. Equality takes effort and respect is earned. There's nothing that's given!

You should "want to know" in a world where capitalism abuses ignorance a man with limited knowledge is only guaranteed one thing and that's poverty. You can have all the money in the world but if you don't have any knowledge. "A fool and his money will soon depart." If you're tired of living in the dark find the light, and if you're tired of being mentally emotionally and financially broke-find knowledge...

•MCDUFFY•

Titles

People may call you a punk or a sucka, they may call you a liar and a thief, a failure or a waste of time or a criminal, a racial slur or a social label. Some people never learn... Does that mean it's you?

People tend to believe what they hear; word travels around the world about a hypocritical ruler or a defiant citizen against their government or when there's more gossip than truth. Then the reality falls beneath the surface.

It takes one person to question truth to allow others to also question the truth, but it takes many to preserve the truth. One may hear one thing while another person may hear something totally different The first person to hear a story may have facts totally opposite from the last. All it takes is one person to break the cycle of manipulation and deceit. Some never step out of the circle of the multitudes... Does that mean you have to listen to the B.S., too?

Some people are categorized as gang members, others simply are just that. Others may be labeled as thugs, hoodlums, or Gs on the streets, preps. Some are claimed to be the realest of the rawest, others may be the most phony

McDuffy, writing from CYA (California Youth Authority) in Stockton, CA, was once a participant in our weekly writing workshops in San Mateo County, tells us to consider the facts, "make the appropriate choice, the right choice" and "filter through the truth and lies." This proves, wisdom has nothing to do with age!

or the slickest hypocrites throughout the land. Some are heroes while others are pirates or terrorists. One king abdicates the throne while another replaces. One example sets precedence just as many examples prove facts to be universal knowledge. Some are sluts, others are whores. Whatever happened to basic table manners an proper etiquette? Have Mamma's rules been ruled out to the streets or to what others set for us?

We are our own leaders, our own decision makers. We may have lost some liberties due to being incarcerated, but we still have too many to give up. Be your own judge of information that passes by your five senses and of what goes around the world. God reigns up on high, but it's up to us to filter through the truth and the lies here on earth. Make the appropriate choice, the right choice. "This is the first day of the rest of your life."

Be legit and never quit.

Live From The SHU, Dear Beat Readers

I was rudely woken up this morning by a C/O, for a 602 inmate appeal hearing. As usual the K9's (police) used that opportunity, as I left my cell, to bombard my eyes with images of garbage to fill my mind and take back to my room to think about. It was then I realized how truly stupid I am to let them put things into my head that is nothing but B.S! I am the only mothersucker in the prison system that is truly "Locked Up"! I am the only motherfuster in prison that sits in my room day after day miserable! I am locked in my room 24 hours a day, seven days a week 365 days a year. I don't have no books to read, I don't have no newspapers delivered to my cell, and I don't have a god damn television.

The inmates that have televisions are truly free and on the streets. The K9's have everyone in the prison system on protective custody status and everyone, every prison gang. Every race is safely segregated from each other by the K9's. I realized today when I went to the 602 hearing, the war is only in my head, and the K9's love to play their games with me the most. When I seen the information they sat me down in front of that "I wasn't suppose to see," I finally realized that these sorry no good mothers are keeping me locked up while 9,890 of the rest of the inmates are free and on the streets through television, newspapers, and magazines.

Here I am stuck in this rut again I wrote about in my story "The Escape" back in November 2006. If I'm correct, now I am sitting in the Tehachapi SHU doing an Indeterminate. I am sick of it. When my current SHU expires on March 30, 2008, I am locking it up "voluntarily." My Uncle who was sending me packages while I was at Salinas Valley, quit sending me packages. He promised me he would order me my TV, but hasn't. I scored a brand new RCA Secureview (television) at Salinas Valley in 2006 from and inmate who traded me straight across for a brand new am/fm CD player that my sister Stella paid \$52.95 for. Guess what? A racist C/O at Salinas decided he was going to enforce the rule that prohibits inmates from trading property with each other. The racist K9 confiscated my RCA Secure view 2002 color T.V. I gave my brand new am/fm CD player to Dave for. Then the racist K9 gave my T.V. to one of his "Spy" racist inmates.

I ended up in the hole waiting for transfer to Pleasant Valley but the K9's had different plans for me and now I am in the SHU. This is why I escaped to Arizona and tried not to come back to this rotten stinking prison system, because "I" am the only stupid inmate that truly is locked up in every sense of the word. Now my own family won't buy me a TV, because they want to know what happened to the TV I had. Did I sell it for dope? That's a disgusting thought. I am stuck in this rut again. Just like the song says "here I am stuck in this rut again, I don't know what to do, and I

Santiago Gonzales is writing to us from CSP Tehachapi in Tehachapi, CA. He is currently doing time in the SHU (Security Housing Unit) Program. Santiago is sharing his trials and tribulations that he faces everyday day while he's locked up. Listen to all the problems this man has to face while he is incarcerated. The state pen is not where anyone wants to end up. And if any of you young people think it's where you want to be, think again. It is far from sweet, as our friend here Santiago will share with you, and that's just a fraction of the problems that he goes through. Go ahead and tell 'em Santiago!

haven't got a friend in the world, no, no, no, baby not even you. Situation number 2 aint bad, but number 9 aint good! I thought I was really hot I was living in Hollywood. Oh I hate to tell you but you really need some help! Situation number 9, blowing my mind!" That is my current theme song let me tell you.

Well, before I sent this letter off, I have a closing message to all you Beat Readers. For one, I ain't cut my hair in over a year and I vow never to cut my jet black hair and the three strikes law is suppose to get put on the ballot in November 2008 elections. I am going to prove how disgusted I am with this stinking prison system and how I have been chosen to be the sacrificial lamb so everyone else can live in peace and freedom in prison. For one, I am going against the change of the three strikes law. It's my choice I get to vote how I want. My miserable circumstances have influenced my strong hate towards my fellow inmates who don't give a suck about me either.

Oh, in my case qualifies as a case that will be re-sentenced because my third strike conviction was not violent or serious, I got convicted of violating a very minor penal code, Penal code 76. If the three strikes law does get modified, not only am I going to suffer it out in this rotten stinking SHU on solitary confinement. Mark my words, if the law does change, I don't want no part of it or all the low lives who put work in to change it. Right now, I've got the state of California by its Gonads in my appeal. And no matter how long it takes I'm gonna get my own case remanded back to court.

I've been in prison because of the low life scumbags for fourteen years and I'm not going to allow them to touch my life with a hundred foot pole! No way! I've suffered this long, it will be worth it to me if I have to be miserable just a little while longer to have my own case remanded back to court without no ones help, that way them suckers cant say I owe them ish!

Don't even trip either. Right now I'm working on getting me a TV and I'm stepping on some toes. Oh well, I'm gonna get me my TV so I can free my self of this rotten prison as soon as possible alone! Without a celly or friends.

I hope the Beat Publishes my story and at least I have an outlet with which to communicate my feeling to yours truly James Gonzales aka Santiago Gonzales, at Tehachapi SHU. 2008 up all night, asleep all day 'till din-din.

•CHEWETED BERRY•

Cheweteo Berry aka The Joker is writing us from Washington State Prison in Walla Walla, WA and wants to share a few words on love. Cheweteo is great writer for The Beat Within. He brings good writing to the magazine. He normally likes to write about knowledge and things that would inspire all, especially the young people. But in this short poem Cheweteo wants to share his thoughts on love!

Life Is Love

Live to love
 And love to live
 What you get in return
 Is what you give.

Love is the mother of all emotions!
 Time has no meaning,
 Love will endure.
 To love is to everything.

Biochemically, there is no difference
 In being in love or eating large amounts of chocolate.

Long live The Beat, one of the world's most beautifullest
 hidden treasures!

One Player's Exit From The Game

It should come as no surprise that one of the things men miss the most in Prison, is the companionship of a woman. Not a day goes by that he isn't enticed to reminisce about past encounters with members of the opposite sex. All it takes is a picture, a movie, a song, a Serena Williams tennis match of any number of subtle nuances to trigger vivid members of the last woman or women touched before his incarceration.

Her smell, her lips, the softness of her skin, the small of her back, every exciting feature of her presence is magnified in his mind. With thoughts like these tantalizing him on a daily basis, It's no wonder that the first course of action for him upon his release is to have sexual intercourse with as many women as he finds available.

This shouldn't sound too outrageous considering the fact that It's a natural reaction for a person, devoid of the object of their desire, to overindulge themselves with the very substance they've been deprived of. The thing is, with the state of the world today, feeding into such longing could be one of the most dangerous activities to partake.

In a recent issue of a man's magazine, a small but informative article discussed the increase of STD cases being reported. According to the story, not only were viruses like Syphilis and Gonorrhea being diagnosed more frequently, but the stains being discovered are becoming increasingly more drug resistant.

One particular variety of Gonorrhea currently circulating said to be so potent, that experts are recommending physicians to refrain from prescribing

Traditional antibiotics for fear of it becoming even more immune to treatment.

After reading the piece, I thought to myself, "could there be a stronger argument

For monogamy?"

Like other men in this position, I also entertained the idea of relieving years of pent up sexual frustration on a multitude of women in an effort to make up for lost time.

I tried to rationalize the irresponsibility of women from my past. In my mind, being familiar with their sexual history would keep me out of harms way. I mean, I'd trodden in those waters before. How much could it hurt me to return for a reacquainting dip?

Fortunately, common sense prevailed when I realized that I hadn't communicated with a majority of these women in years. There was no way of knowing where they had been, or how many visitors they had invited into their bedrooms. Having relations with them would be just as risky as hooking up with a complete stranger.

After being shot, surviving x-amount of years in prison, maintaining my health and all my teeth, I would have to be the craziest son-of-a-gun in God's creation to roll the dice with the ultimate symbol of my manhood. My entire sex life ruined because the head on my shoulders couldn't out think the one below my waist. Thought alone brought me to the conclusion that being a player in the 2007 is a wrap. Fidelity is the new sexy, and blatant promiscuity is indeed a bad look...make way for the born again virgin!

Shawn Montgomery is writing to us from Florida State Prison in Raiford, Fla. Shawn Montgomery has been writing to us for a while now. He's a knowledgeable writer and wants to kick some game and facts about life to all the young and old readers of The Beat Within. Shawn writes a lot about social issues that's affecting the community right now. His topics ranges from HIV, to women, to child abuse. He's a very influential writer that's always trying to send a message out to you readers!



In Time Of Need, Whom Do You Turn To?

There's nothing more precious than having a friend. A friend is someone who knows all your secrets, has your undying trust, and is the only person you can lean on when you're feeling down and troubled. The friend can be anyone, even a family member. It can be a counselor, a teacher, or even the Beat Within. It really doesn't matter. We all need someone to reach out to when we're in need. The kind of need I'm talking about is not necessarily financial, but more of a spiritual nature. No one should go through life, troubled and miserable. There's nothing wrong with admitting you need help. There's nothing wrong with reaching out to someone because emotionally, you feel you can't deal with something. There's nothing wrong with admitting you need to talk to someone, because you can't deal with a problem or situation. None of us are immune to pain and agony. We just handle it in different ways. Some of us try to hide it and others try to pretend they're so strong nothing bothers them. We're all human and therefore subject to the same trials and tribulations as any one else. In as much as some of us would like others to think nothing bothers us, there is that one person who knows that's not true. There's that one person you turn to in time of need. Whether it be a preacher or teacher makes no difference. Whatever it takes to alleviate your pain and make you feel better is good, especially if it's given by someone you trust and someone who can be trusted be others.

Dedicated to Jessica

There's nothing wrong with admitting you need to talk to someone, because you can't deal with a problem or situation.

Jena Was Just The Beginning

The only thing that disappointed me about the movement to free the "Jena 6" was the fact that I wasn't there to participate. After missing the Million Man March in '95, I would have loved to have been apart of the contingency that converged on Louisiana.

It was good to see that some of us are still willing to stand up for something. For a minute it seemed as if this generation was so caught up in the era of "party and bull—" that it didn't have the time to concentrate on anything outside of itself. The image of young black people coming to the aid and rescue of other young black people was beautiful, if nothing else, the rally sent the message to the world that we will not stand idly by while injustice is being perpetrated on anyone, particularly our children.

I applaud the efforts of individuals like Michael Baisden, Steve Harvey and Tom Joyner for using their powerful voices to raise awareness for such an important issue. I just hope they realize that the struggle is far from over.

While the buses are still warm and the momentum is in full swing, this would be the perfect opportunity to focus all of that positive energy toward helping a population of young men who've already fallen victim to an unjust and biased system.

As this is being written there are thousands of non-violent and first-time offenders serving decades in State and Federal prison for simple drug offences. Men, not much older than the six students from Jena, have had their entire lives ruined by harsh sentencing guidelines that serve no other purpose than to punish unmercifully.

Drug conspiracy convictions for crack-cocaine carry ten years to life sentences with no possibility of parole. Young men and women, who may have learned their lessons after three or four years behind bars, can never show their growth and potential because current laws force them to spend their most productive years incarcerated.

Since I've been down, I've met brothers with the acumen and talent to rival any thing I've ever witnessed on the streets. Artists whose work could stand next to Picasso, singers with voices made for radio, brilliant novel writers, outstanding athletes and profound intellectuals who can match wits with the sharpest orators. All for them, locked away from a world

that may never experience their shine.

This, however, doesn't have to be the case. Currently there are several bills on the floor of Congress that could give many of these individuals a second chance at life. After witnessing the power of a people on a mission draw international attention for their cause, I can only imagine what kind of impact that same force would have on legislation if aimed in that direction.

The battle in Jena, that was just the beginning. Besides, what good is it for the whole to save "6" and lose sixty thousand when the resources are in place to save them all? None of us are free until all of us are free.

The Friend Who Just Stands By
When trouble comes your soul to try,
You love the friend who just stands by.
Perhaps there's nothing she can do;
The thing is strictly up to you.
For there are troubles all your own,
And paths the soul must tread alone;
Times when love can't smooth the road,
Nor friendship lift the heavy load.

But just to feel you have a friend,
Who will stand by until the end;

Whose sympathy through any endures,
Whose warm handclasp is always yours.
It helps somehow to pull you through,
Although there's nothing she can do;
A and so with fervent heart we cry,
"God bless the friend who just stands by."

God's Pumpkin Patch
I asked a woman, "What is it like to be a Christian?"

She replied, "It is like being a pumpkin. God picks you from the patch, brings you in, and washes all the dirt off you. Then he cuts off the top and scoops out all the yucky stuff. Her removes the seeds of doubt, hate, greed. Etc., and then he carves you a new smiling face and puts his light inside of you to shine for all the world to see."

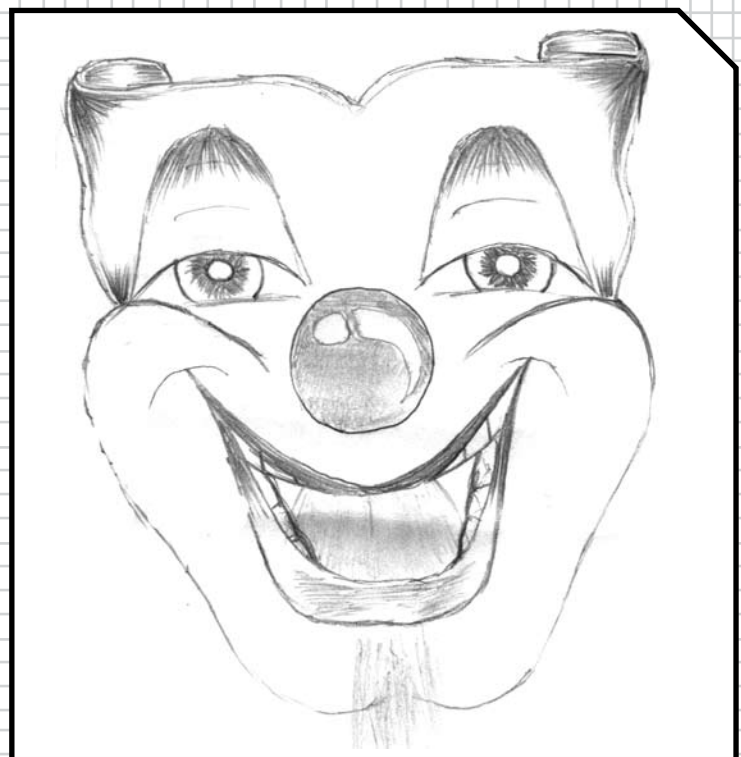
HIV Testing

Black communities are being ravaged and attacked by an epidemic of AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STI's).

Today black women make up more than half of all women who have died of AIDS. Although a number of AIDS cases can be attributed to Injection Drug Use (IDU), too many of you – whether gay, straight, male female – continue to have unprotected sex with multiple partners or people we barely know. the rate of HIV/AIDS among black women is three times as high as that among Latino women and eighteen times as high as that among white women.

While the vast majority of new infections still occur among men – both in America at large and in Black America – the racial gap infection rates among women is astounding. For women overall, the epidemic is a sexual one. According to the data the CDC released in November 2005, 78% of black women with HIV contracted it through unprotected sex, while 19% contracted it through injecting drugs with contaminated needles. But it is also important to note how the sex partners of those women contracted the virus. There remain a large percentage of women who report that they don't know what the "risk factor" for their partner had been.

For information, contact: For HIV/AIDS
National STD & AIDS Hotline
1-800-342-2437
www.KNOWHIV/AIDS.org
1-866-344-KNOW (1-866-344-5669)



Too Close For Comfort

There have been several times in my life where events were considered unfavorable and too close for comfort. Like the time I was six or seven years old and my grandma caught me with both hands in the fish bowl trying desperately to catch one of her guppies. When caught in the act and asked just what in tar nation did I think I was doing (still today I don't know what "tar nation" is but apparently Grandma did) I replied in all, deer caught in headlights look, seriousness, "Washing my hands."

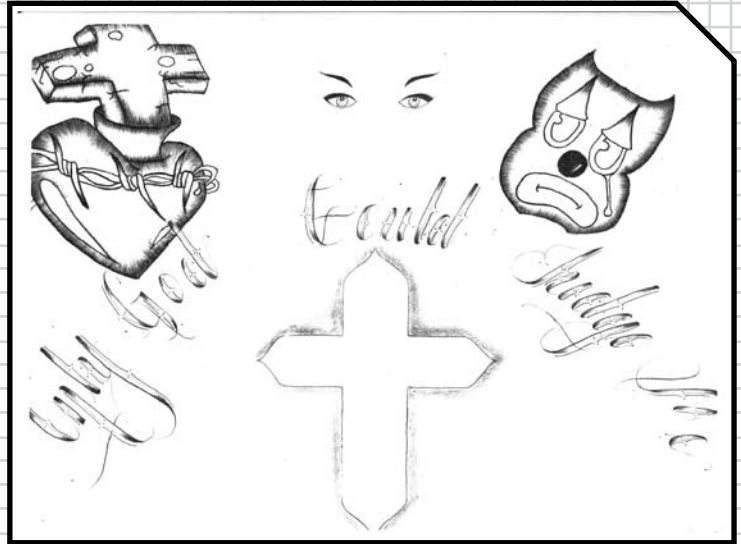
To further my point I immediately began rubbing my hands together in a washing motion that was causing a small tsunami in the fish bowl. Of course, like Grandmas do, she pretended to be mad while trying not to smile but other wise let me make it. But to a kid that was to close for comfort because had my mom caught me. Woo-wee, there would have been hell to pay! Several of my too close for comforts have to do with nearly dying.

Like the time, as a child, I ate a bottle of heart medication because I thought it was candy. Luckily my sister, wouldn't eat any when I offered to share and told our Grandma when I lost consciousness because of the sudden overdose. A few years later she saved me again from electrocution. This was back in the days when kids had toys that were heavy, durable, and sometimes required electricity to operate. My sister and I had such a toy (I don't remember what it was) but we couldn't play with it because my dad said we couldn't play with it in the front yard (where the electricity outlet was located) and had to play with it in the backyard (no outlet). This would discourage a lot of kids and perhaps bring on a lot of crying fits.

Not with me. I see it as an opportunity to be an electrician. After all, I had seen my dad fix a lot of things by twisting wires together with black tape. I didn't have any black tape but there was miles of old wire and extension cords piled up by our garage that was to be sold for its copper. I was halfway there. I pulled out pieces and twisted, tied, and wrapped ends together until I had a long extension cord that reached from the front to the back. The plug in was located on out patio, which was wet from our water fight earlier in the day - I was bare-footed. I think you know what happened next. When I plugged in my contraption the electricity hit me and knocked me down and I became tangled up in the wire.

My sister came running and grabbed me to pull me away and got knocked on her butt. Being badly shocked is a strong deterrent not to grab a hold of something or someone again. But let me tell ya something, my sister was a hard headed, determined, little girl - and she loved her brother. She got up and grabbed me again...and again...and again...each time she grabbed me she would get knocked down on her butt, but she kept coming back until she finally pulled me away - and then went to get help. It took nearly three weeks for her hair to lay down and become somewhat manageable and still today when she has a bad hair day she blames it on me...that was a little too close for comfort for both of us, I think. But what I find, above all else too close for comfort is Florida State Prison.

What manner of people are these folks who can torture young children so brutally over and over again?



Child Abuse or Child Torture?

Young children can try your patience. They can make you so mad until you just want to kill them, but you can't and you shouldn't. It matters not what they do or how mad they make you, we must be civil toward them in how we discipline them.

Parents and adults are treating children so badly until almost no day goes by where the news isn't replete with news of children being abused. It is called abuse, but torture may be a better description. How brutal can some people be?

The horrible stories about how people torture their children is blood curling. We are talking about mothers and daddies and we are talking about children that range in age from a few months old to about ten years of age. We read where young children are burned, starved, kept in filth-locked up areas, beaten brutally, and so many other horrible things.

What manner of people are these folks who can torture young children so brutally over and over again? Children are punched in vital places, bones are broken, bodies are maimed and scared and children are affected psychologically for life.

This isn't child abuse, instead it is child torture. It is not enough to take the children from these abusive people. In addition, these people need to be and must be severely punished. Under no conditions should young children be treated that way.

Parents, single or married, must realize that children being born is never the fault of the child. They must also realize that the child had no part in being born into this world. But! The birth of a child changes the lives of at least one of the parents. If not a parent, the child changes the life of whoever the keeper is. These cases of child torture are shining examples of why everybody shouldn't be parents or caretakers of children.

Parents and caretakers can do themselves, the children and the law a favor by seeing a psychologist or a psychiatrist if they realize that they have a tendency to be brutal and physically harmful to children and especially to their own.

I ask these people: How do you live with yourself? How do you look at yourself in the mirror? Does it give you a feeling of satisfaction? If your answer to any of these questions is yes, you need help.

Choices

We all make choices everyday. I have made many bad choices in my life. The one that impacted my life the most was to start using drugs. This influenced my life in more than one way. As a 27 year old recovering addict and prostitute. I faced many challenges even inside these prison walls.

Everyday I am sober I feel more confident. I am able to look back now and remember what it was like to have to wake up and find my next hit or fix. The hell I went through! The way I degraded my body daily out there. I allowed others to abuse me and I abused myself.

Some days, I have flashbacks of having to get up enough energy to get up and go work the street. What it was like to be 18 years old working Stewart Ave. now known as Metropolitan Ave. in GA. Walking the most dangerous areas of Atlanta at 2:00am, looking for my new trick.

Years later, the same behavior would lead to me contracting HIV. Not only did I contract it, but also I infected my husband. During my years of drug using and addiction, I developed many other behaviors.

Being sober and clean off drugs did not change the behaviors I had become accustomed too. Living in a half way house in Atlanta I found myself in a situation where I needed money for the rent and my needs. I once again found myself resorting to my old behaviors. Selling my body so I did it to survive. But never taking into consideration of my actions. I never once thought about my consequences.

Months later I am reunited with my husband. The guilt of my actions was way too much for me to handle. We decided to go to marriage counseling. It was very hot August evening in Atlanta it was a Friday night in 2005. I decided that I would get high. After 2 years of being sober I thought it would be ok to smoke some crack. I figured no one would ever know. I was wrong everyone knew or so I thought. This lead to me leaving halfway house and my violating my probation and to me leaving the state. This lead to me coming to MI. This just made it easier for me to continue to use drugs. The continuation of my drug use of course only got worse it progressed from just crack back to using heroin and crack. And back to me working the streets of Michigan on Right Mile Rd. in Detroit.

A day in my life on Eight Mile...6:30am my husband leaves for work. I get up or either I have been up most of the night anyway. I kiss him bye and then it starts my head, my stomach, it all starts racing. I wait for my friend or we'll call her Chris. I have to wait for her to score a carrack, now it is 7:30am, we jump in the car still in our night clothes or in something we pulled together. We head to the dope house to score. We want it so bad we are tying off our arm before we ever get there. She goes in the spot and she is out.

I have everything ready when she gets back to the car the spoon, the water, the cotton, the rig. It's all ready and she is yelling she can't find a vein. Finally it's in I push it in I pull it back out. I feel my body go warm instantly. We don't speak the rest of the ride back to the shop. My mind is racing I need money not right now. I figure I have about 6-7 hours before my husband comes back from work. So I know if I want to stay high I have to head to Eight Mile.

I get back to the shop and get ready. Now I head to the stroll I have to have some money. I feel sick walking. Damn I just got sick. I am too high I need rock to calm down. I ask the dope boys to front me \$20 they know I am good for it. I got to an abandoned house and smoke, now I have to get to work, first car, 9:00 am, that was quick, only five min businessman headed to work. Now I am full of guilt and have to keep getting high to stop the feeling I am having.

It is time for my husband to be back. I tell him I have been in bed all day but he already knows by the way I look and how I am sweating. Of course, I tell him I need to get high I don't feel good. So this leads to me working the streets all night and getting high, I can't stop I am addicted to both the drug and the lifestyle.

Many nights of crying and praying to God would take me out of this world. I was raped more than one occasion and saw things that I still can't talk about. I saw my husband cry and beg me to stop. He is also a drug user but what choice did I

Stephanie Walters is writing to us from Robert Scotts Correctional Facility in Plymouth, Michigan, hoping to tell the story of her life and the choices she made. We all make mistakes, we just have to learn from them. If we don't learn then we can't grow to be mature. And eventually we'll fall back to old ways and bad habits. Stephanie here hopes to tell her story so all you readers can learn from her mistakes. She wants y'all to know that even though you made a bad choice doesn't mean that you have to keep making bad choices. We all have choices to make and the simple fact of the matter is we make them, whether they are right or wrong. And even if we do make a couple bad choices we can always expect a better outcome of the situation by trying to make the right choices.

leave him. When it came to me he just followed what ever I wanted to do. And if I wanted to get high he knew what would happen and what that included. He had a choice that was to either stay out there or watch over me or to sit back at our spot and wait for me. He cried a lot of nights with me and held me after the bad nights and tells me that we needed to stop getting high but I wasn't ready. I just kept making the same bad choices over and over again. Too scared to face the reality of what if had left behind. This lead to me working all night and coming in at two or three in the morning and doing it all over again the next day.

I made a choice to get sober and try to start over. Both my husband and I started going to church I went and got a real job at Taco Bell and he started working with the church people. But once again I made a bad choice and on January 1st 2006 at 1:00am I decided to get high. Husband and I had spent New Year's Eve in church so that we could avoid the drugs and drinking. But it came to us! I was left with a choice and I made the wrong one.

On January 16th 2006 I was involved with a crime that brought me to prison. I was given plenty of choices to make and made to wrong ones over and over again.

While sitting in county jail I continued to make bad choices. I smoked weed did dope and made hooch. I had made the choice to say I don't care. I'll do what I want to do. I knew I was coming to prison and new how I would do my bit I would get high, manipulate men, and get into a relationship. Do all the things I know help me to not deal with feelings.

I never thought I would get here and hear Ms. Walters you are HIV positive, or for that matter hear from my husband that he is also infected. Some days still are difficult and I still sometimes want to get high to cope with feeling and my issues. I also still find myself wanting to manipulate people. But today I have a choice.

I watch women in here sell their souls. It still is prostitution whether is for a cup of coffee of a full \$85.00 shop. It is sad for me to watch it happen day in and day out. Because I know that those women do that are looking for worthiness and love and acceptance but they rarely succeed. I know that because that is what I was always looking for out there. But all I found was false happiness and a false confidence.

People get to a point where they feel they don't have a choice, but that it is just the way it is you might here them say. I once left that way. Today I can choose to be a part of what everyone else is doing or I can be a leader. I don't have to sell my soul, body or mind to make it or to make someone else happy. I have accepted who I am and I have made a choice to be her.

I have choices daily to make and the differences is today I know it. Doing drugs and living the lifestyle I led make me believe that I didn't have an option any longer. But a sober mind and body tell me something different.

I don't promise anyone or myself I'll be sober forever but I do make a choice to do what is best for me physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. And doing that open doors for me to make better choices in my life. I wake up everyday and ask for help from my higher and drug addict as I once thought I was. I am Stephanie and I have HIV and I am a recovering addict and prostitute. That is what I use to do not who I am.

Everyday inside these walls we have choices to make and we can change ourselves if we really want to. I feel that weight, so use to making bad choices that we forget we know how to make good ones. Even though they have our freedom they don't have our will.

We have choices today!

Master Artist

This is the last call to artist
We have the power to change
This world we live in...
This world was created by
Art... everything we see
Around us... is art!
The way we act, by movement
Is an art form... our ways
Of speaking... the words
We chose to say to make a clear statement
This is art... change will
Only happen when the artist
Has come tired of looking
At the same picture...
And pulls out his tools
And set out to create a
New picture!
Music sets the mood... picture
Set's the reality... philosophy
Gives a reason for being
Now come let's create a
New world for all humanity...
But first there are a couple of things we need too
Love... brevity, will power
And trust in yourself and your art form...
And if you lack these
Create them!

How to Live

Sometimes we must travel
Alone...
Sometimes we must learn how
To grow a red rose before the white...
Sometimes we must learn to
Love the smaller thing of life...
Sometimes we must learn to
Be a beacon to others before
We can see the light!

Perfect Sacrifice

Aim... high use the
Spirit inside your heart
To fly beyond a "what"?
And a "why"?
Only when others hold
You down... telling you
"No" that's impossible!
Do you grow cold...
What they're really trying
To say is "no" don't leave
Me all alone... it's
Scarily I need someone to
Hold..."
That is the sing of
Something not being right
Cause a true friend would
Help you too take flight!
Cause he knows that you
Could bring light to all
Darkness and fright!
This is the perfect
Sacrifice!

H. Shepard is writing us From Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, Ca. He is telling everybody to develop whatever skill that they may have, to use it, to change any unpleasant situation. He is a very talented artist and he wants to paint a picture with words for all you readers to see. Here's a few poems he wants to share with us all. Thanks!

(Beat Writer) Kastro, The Becoming...

You express words of an artily
Nature...yet to say, your lost
Inside the storm
Isn't a storm an element of
Nature? Sometimes I wonder,
Do you understand the power
Of art... the craft of your skills?
You have the power to destroy
Or build...instead you choose
To sleep in the bed with the
Devil...
And yah! I listen to heavy
Metal... it's just music of
Center made RABELS...
Some speak truth... and some
Use mind control to cloud the
Minds of lost RABELS...
Yet which ever one, they maybe
They are in control of there
Identity...
Leading to sheep with the
Powers of there art's, by
The color of their fleece...
To avoid of darkness, or
To their true identity...
Kastro..., which one are you
Gonna follow? Is which one
Do you wish to be? An artist
Or a sheep?
Chose wisely! Because
The choice you make will
Determine...
If your sky (mind) will
Stay stormy... or
Suddenly become sunny
Remember what you said
No surrender no retreat...
So don't run from your
Dreams fight until you've
Set them free!

THE
BEAT

New Age Thought

We are coming to a change
Our minds seeks to be comfort
By our hearts warming flame...
Which burns for freedom
Of creed, race, and religion
We have suffered as much
As the Christ, bearing out
Cross on our backs,
No matter the distance
Or pain, we continue on
Seeking to close in on
The rang...
The path we chose is
Related to the sun's travel's
Throughout the night and day
We conquer to gain, we
Be conquer to gain...all
Life must understand this
Art...
Victory then shame...
Shame then victory... this
Is the path all must experience
Before true victory is attain...
The never-ending flow of all
Things...the oneness of all
Fortunes and pains... the time
Is coming
The heart and minds seek to
Unite in to the supreme victory
Of the one true flame
Love which is the law, love which
Is what bonds... see with one
"Eye" in flow like the river
Falling from the mountain range...
'Cause "I am" that flame

Lost Word

Art just flows from the
Soul...as the RAYS gives
Life to the earth...
Art gives delight to the
Soul...
As these years pass above
A head of my bones...my
Skill to create becomes
More easy to control
And I fear none like the
Wolf on the hunt... because
I follow the way of the stars
The way of the four seasons
Of God and the Gods! Holla
If you feel the freedom of
TRUE LOVE!

I Am

I am the problem
And the solution...
I am the searcher
And the giver...
I am the lover
And the healer...
I am the healed
And the sick...
I am the poor
And the rich...
I am the happy face
And the sad heart...
We are all that we see
And feel...
We are the solution
We are the problem...

EDWARD DWIGHT CHAPIN

It's Never Too Late

I am currently serving a 20-year sentence with half time for a Meth lab and two pounds of Meth. My release date is in October of 2014. One valuable lesson that I have learned is that this time I have can be a true blessing, if I use it wisely.

As a direct result of this case, I have literally lost everything. I lost my beautiful wife, all of my worldly possessions and my freedom. The material possessions can be replaced, but my wife and freedom cannot. Sure I can and probably will find a different wife, but freedom is something that, once lost, is irreplaceable.

Here's the good news...I have choices to make now that will forever affect my life and future. I can spend all this time I have left on my sentence being miserable and plotting how to do "The Perfect Crime" when I get out; or I can use this time to better myself and do things that will help me become a productive member of society. My choices will make me either a liability to society or beneficial to society.

True insanity is doing the same things over and over, expecting different results each time. Do not let anyone ever tell you that crime doesn't pay! It pays in misery and grief, for all our loved ones and us. It pays in broken relationships and grief. It pays in so many ways.

Personally, I am going to concentrate on doing whatever it takes to take college courses and further my education while I am in prison. If anyone reading this does not think that

Edward Dwight Chapin is writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in California. He's currently doing a 20 year bid and is trying to inform everybody that even though you have made mistakes, big or small, that it's never too late to start making good choices. If he can do it anybody can. And it's true, the choices you make now will forever affect your life and future. So if you're not making good choices right now you need to stop and reflect on life. Listen to Edward's story cause it's never too late!

education is not the key to the start of success, then you are fooling yourself.

I saw a guy in the county jail once about 19 years old that was facing life for murdering someone for his gang. He and I talked about his situation and how he got there. It turns out that his "gang" didn't send him any money on his books or even wrote him any letters of support. This young man actually took life for his gang and the members of his gang and left him in jail for dead! Does this story sound familiar?

True friends are there for you no matter what. The problem is with being in most gangs or involved in the illegal drug trade is that when you go to jail for your "friends" it turns that they were never real friends to begin with. Use your time wisely. Be positive while you are in jail or prison. Quit making excuses and stop burning bridges. It's never too late to change.

I will close for now. Thank you for the outstanding job and the people involved in your newsletter are doing. Have a very nice day.

Very truly yours,

A Wasted Life

My lust, my greed, my deepest desire
To my own to restore I can afford to expire
And yet I hold on afraid to release
In fear to lose my satisfaction and moments of peace
My hatred, my ego, my pride is my deceit
To give into what maturely easy is admitting defeat
In due time when death is closer than youth
It is then I hope to realize my life was uncouth
But for now reality chained to my mind
Keeps me tied down to responsibility for my crimes
It was not my sin that was given when I was born
But a conclusion I sought when I was forlorn
Hopeless dreams of what could have been
My imprisonment is my charge for the choice I made then
Ignoring my heart and denying my soul
Power and popularity was my only goal
And in my past to remember me by
Are the people I hurt and how they died
A tale to be scorned for my ignorant deeds
A child imprisoned away from society
Human I am and can only be
Who practiced his sin and paid his fee,
There is only one shot at existence on earth
Don't ever take it with ease
Work for the reason of your birth
For sin cannot set you free

Jeremy Towner is writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in California. His poems are powerful and there's a message behind each and every one of them. So take a moment of your time to read these poems that our good ol' friend Jeremy is writing for y'all to hear. So nice to hear from an ol' friend, who we met many years ago in Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall.

The Incarcerated Are Powerless

We are of the mercy of our captors
Our spirits are restless
Our thoughts savage like a wild beast
Frustration fueling our provoked anger
Helpless at the loss of our freedom
Nothing but our thoughts to speak with
All the while time drips away
Insanity sets like a stain
Twisted screams in the night
Screams that communicate loss and want
Fueled by the hatred of our captors
Their provocation set upon fragile minds
Inventing their form of torture
Sick is the way they play
Cat and mouse is their game
Break us down to dust
To nothing
Crush any thought of fight away
Under the thumb of power and hungry commoners
Kings in their dreams
But we are their experiment
Powerless we may be
But alive we still are
Our life they hesitate to take
They fear the unknowable, as do we
And so they play with our minds
Only the strong will survive
A secret power they can't take
Will power
Yet while the will is ours
We are powerless at so great a foe
A feather fighting the wind
Are our lost cries
Powerless is a savage thing
Emotions the captors of our minds

Sea of Sight

Here I am
Floating in an abyss
Floating in this dark sea
This dark sea of iniquity
Vile and wretched are the waves
Crashing with the force of destruction
And yet my journey is made clear
By the light of insight
I know what I have done
What I have caused
Nothing but sorrow
Sorrow for the lost soul
The body that I have taken
The vessel of the spirit
I see now
What a horrid thing I have done
Am I sorry for this act
If I said no then where's the wisdom?
If I said yes would you believe me?
So why ask if you don't care
Vile tasting sin upon the sea
I wonder with my thoughts
Like a piece of drifting wood
The different ways to go
Which way do I float?
My back is burned by the sun
With the gentle caress of wind
Can I revive from where I've drowned
Live again in life, in peace
Solitude my companion
My life long friend
Will you be with me
To the very end
How long...
The wait is eternal
Vast as the ocean's of time
Oh, friend of mine
You have shed light on my eyes
You have shown me what I had
And what I've lost
Too high was the cost
Too late did I pay
But now you show the way?
What current of this sea
Have you chosen for me?
How can I live if I have no life?
I can learn the knowledge of the world
It is here in the abyss
The light of insight
Vast in the free fall of life
Where life and death have fine lines
Where the abyss is keeper
Keeper of time
By my knowledge is useless
Without a life

A Chapter In My Life

I remember a time when we were in Alaska at Eielson Air Force Base. I met the very first friends I ever had. J.J and Jacob. Two of the most fun and trusting friends I ever knew. They awoke in me a different way of life. A life of magic and imagination, adventure and daring with joy elation for our happiness. We would dare each other to accomplish ridiculous deeds to see how far each of us could, or would, dare to go. It was our initiation into bravery and manhood. We guided each other into finding ourselves through our advances of being the leader or the strongest, or the smartest and most of all the most generous.

Through these years I started to discern in a weak way of what was right and what was wrong. I would look at my own past and present with rage and disgust and longing for it to be changed on a whim. I felt like exploding with my knowing that what happened to me was and is wrong but also trapped because my elder piers were too ignorant to lend an understanding ear to a child who they think knows nothing.

So with my own decision made from being tired and losing my grip and caring I decided to take matters into my own hands. That I think was my turning point in the way I looked at life and led me to where I am today. But it saved my sister, and forever how brief a time it was, it saved my sanity.

I was late coming home one evening from my friend's home, which was only a hundred feet away. Coming home late was something I had never done and I knew that what was to come would be painful. But as fate would have it, from some part of my mind, I said enough.

It was not like me to take a stand but to coward in a corner and expect what was coming.

So I walked into my home hoping to avoid confrontation. The lights were out as I walked to the dining room but as I entered, the light was on and smoke from cigarettes choked the room. With all my own defiance and will power I still could not keep away my fear.

She was sitting at the head of the table starring at me as a lion watches her prey. I knew then as solid fact that this would be a very bad night, but only if I let it happen. Then came the struggle of my thoughts, my decisions, the consequences of my actions should I choose to go through with my bravery and what I would receive anyways if I didn't. So I then thought to myself, "what have I to lose?"

I could not stand by while she continued to do what I knew was immoral and wrong. I could also not stand by while the same thing would happen to my sister.

All throughout our past my sister helped me. Stood up for me and took punishment for me. She would hide the worst things done to her, I think in fear of being ashamed of truth. Truth is most bitterness with the world is not something we wish to keep tasting. But I knew what was happening and so I shared her bitterness never deceiving her trust because I knew what it was like.

With all of these emotions and memories of being let down and trained like an animal, to be treated like a disobedient pet by the ones who are to share life and it's wisdom with us. By those who were before us children and learned how the world works. Who are supposed to demonstrate not only how to live but how to feel and act.

Being betrayed by my own flesh and blood and angry at the world for letting it go in ignorance, because of their coward ness, I exploded.

As she came at me I ran towards the kitchen, ignoring my surroundings, ignoring the coward in me and letting my rage take control, I went straight for the knife drawer and pulled out the biggest knife I could find and I turned to face my dragon, my demon, and my hell. The one symbol of life gone wrong, though I knew not how to live another, I just knew that one existed, and I faced her. I stood ground crouched down low with the knife poised ready to strike. As soon as she saw me she froze. Surprised, I suppose at the uncharacteristic move that I had made. She hesitated for a moment and then took a step forward. But I wouldn't let her come closer and so I warned her "touch me or my sister one more time woman and I'll stick you with this!"

This was not me. I was so surprised then at what I had done and said that I started to walk out of the kitchen without her following me and as soon as I left the dining room I ran. I ran as fast as I could go to a place of safety. My room.

I barricaded my door with my bed and turned out the light. I then sat on my bed with the knife in my hand still, and I cried.

It was all I could do. I grieved for a life lost, I grieved for a life wanted, I grieved because my fear wouldn't let go. I kept thinking I was in trouble and that this moment is the end. This is the last stand right here in this room. And for what, it might be worth it. I'll go fighting.

A Spark Saved From Hell

Unknown to myself, I have searched my thoughts
to find a soul, long ago lost
I have traveled my mind
For what I might find
The beast I became
Developed over time
My sight was dark, yet I could see
The silence was fear of iniquity
So loud I could hear
The end was near
But I could not leave
I began my search here
In a bottomless hole
Where thoughts become lost
Unknown to myself, my life was the cost
A payment for passage
Past the gates of sin
I searched for a soul lost within

A spark of light
A joyous sight
To obtain this flame
I would fight
Long was the war
That I waged inside
Head long into battle I would ride
Me ego and pride
Were enemies to defeat
Honor and courage the enemy would meet
And over time with its patient hand
I would finally stand alone among the damned
I would grab the spark
That life that's inside
The soul of my heart
Of which I will find
And live again among the world to see
A lost soul I have found
Fought for and set free

My Angry Poem

Soak it up and keep
movin'
Cut deep and still bleedin'
You can see the bruises
And my arm got everyone
at a distance
Forget your sympathies
Since 12 years old I ain't
seen
A Christmas, birthday or
anything
Just the inside of this
system
And rehabilitation is
frivolous
It's really quite ridiculous
Convicts stay at war
Bloodshed is relentless
Ain't seen my son since I
shook my B.M.
My baby niece is in a
group home
And I can't do shhh
Tears fill my eyes but they
won't break skin

Good intentions are
present
But sin always wins
It gets its never changing
way
Bad memories are never
far away
And it eats at my brain
like raw cocaine
Got sanity?
Maybe that should be my
logo
'Cause at times I feel I'm
losin' mines
And I lose focus while my
anger gets the best of me
I know this
I lose my composure and
it irritates me
It's just the stress and the
everlasting pressure
So pain inflicted
Hopin' for it all to get
better
But you won't comprehend
this

We welcome back our old friend Angel Felix also known in these pages as Sinful. It's awesome to have him back in the mix where he belongs lacing us readers with some game from the California State Prison Sacramento in Represa, CA, especially now that he is months away from touching down. We have known Sinful for years, we are forever grateful that he has maintained contact with us on this very dark journey through the prison system, as we are with most of you contributors. We do hope to hear from our ol' friend before he leaves, definitely when he is free!

??????

Travel through the mind of a sinful man
Past demons, past hope, and past dreamin'
To the depths of eternal bleedin'
Where the memories haunt my mind and my soul
Feel the pain of all the times that a loved one had to die
And this drama that I see
All this freakin' poverty
All these freakin' crooked police
All these teachers who don't teach anything
Forget Columbus and these Virginia-born presidents
This is really irrelevant to the survival of this proletariat
And conditions that I've faced
Puttin' a smile on my face
While tryin' to explain to my baby niece
Why her mother is locked away
And why her grandma acts so cold
And why they're always drunk and stoned
I try to explain it all
But sometimes I just don't know
What the freak to say
So I tuck it all away
Hopin' for the day
That I can feel the sunshine and erase the pain

Beat Within

What's good! I put some of my crazy thoughts onto paper once again. I think I sent one already, but I didn't see it put in your weekly so I'm pushin' it back in front of you. Those of you who know this scribble know my style. I'm more on the dark side, somewhere in the shadows.

I revised my poems to send to you. It's hard. I had to throw in a lot of different words in place of cuss words. Some are easy to see, but others I had to switch up a whole line or two. I think it throws them off a bit, but when I think about it, it is just expression and you won't have to mess with it. Feel me.

I am in this poetry class here. I don't remember if I mentioned it, but we get visitors. A few months back we had 3 guest speakers from Alaska - Corinna Delgado, a poet, Melissa Mitchell, and Shaun. They are musicians. We had this mini-concert. It was like Woodstock in 2007, just in a tiny room, but it was a pleasant retreat from the everyday prison life. People need this form of interaction with the outside world but more importantly, people need interaction within our community.

We always talk about changing, but then we are caught up in politics and we can't see past it. I live it daily but to be able to interact with other writers of different nationalities and creeds breaks down barriers and stereotypes. My pen is trippin', but anyways, these workshops are vital to the convicts who have poetic or artistic talent.

There are some people here who spit thymes harder than mainstream rappers or any poets I've ever heard or read. This is real, not candy-coated and I love it. People are raw and uncut and it gives insight into who they are, the real them, and it is a reality check. It shows us that we are not that different. We may have different ways of expressing ourselves, but we all have a story to tell, whether it's dark and angry like mine, or hip hop, or happy-happy-joy-joy. It's an expression of oneself, thoughts, views, etc.

I am down to like some months now. I've enjoyed writing to The Beat through the years. Since High Desert I've had the pleasure of reading your collection of poems. You give people a chance to express themselves and it shows the community that people locked up are human too. We're not just whatever the courts label us and convict us of. We're human too, and not too different from them.

Let me wrap this up now. Keep doin' your thing!
In solidarity...

Tired

"Depressed" you say
Now homie, I'm just tired
"Suicidal" you say
Maybe just a lil'
I've been strugglin' to survive all my life
So many smilin' faces and deceptive letters
This is why I bullet proof my heart and fortify my mind
I want to become a better man
A humble person I may never be
But I want to give something back to society
Besides more reasons to put these shackles on me
Make my pops and my son proud of me
Be a positive role model to my baby niece
Maybe I'm too much of a dreamer
I consider myself a killa whale, not a Pisces
I think big
Makin' moves was my thing
Now I just want to be able to move
Without the flashin' lights behind me
Tryin' to capture me
I want to be free in my mind too
Not just on the streets
'Cause since childhood
I been a slave to my sinful ways
Actin' a fool
Sparkin' my heat
Never thinking twice to let off 2-2-3's
I lost so much, but I'm still alive
I'm still breathin', still bleedin'
And I still believe
That I will see better days
Than the ones I've seen
So stop tryin' to sympathize with me

Become A Man or Woman

Becoming a man or woman doesn't happen overnight. It can take years, and it might not happen. But it can be accomplished.

To become a man or woman a person must stay on his own two feet and want to change with the ambition to succeed. He must have a job and work to take care of his family, loved ones and children, and teach them the right path.

He must show them the path to success, and teach them to live and grow and achieve their desires with pride.

Inside These Prison Walls

Inside these prison walls is a corrupt and ugly place, a place deemed to be for the dead.

An animal doesn't even deserve being in this dungeon. Inside these prison walls is a place where happiness is taken,

a place where you are told when to eat, sleep or defecate, a place where guards treat you bad, talk bad to you like you ain't worth a cent.

And if you are 1 out of 1,000 and get a slavery job, what you make is cents.

In this place you will be pressured and pushed to stab someone and if you refuse you'll be stabbed. So if you think that you came in with a year or two, you'll end up with "15 to life."

If you are wise and strong mentally you might get out in a year or two.

Learn from my experience and don't end up behind these prison walls like I did. I hope this little insight has an impact on the youth out there.

To all the Young Generation, love your family and parents. Do the right thing. Don't follow my footsteps and learn the hard way like I did.

We welcome back our old friend Slick Rick aka Richard S., who writes us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. It has been awhile since we last heard from Slick, we do hope it is not the last, and he can muster up a stamp when he is motivated to share more with us before his release date.

Change

Change can start today. If you are, or were, selling drugs, stop!

If you are using drugs go to rehab.

If you are being disobedient to your folks, stop and start listening to them.

Stop ditching school. Stop hanging around the bad crowd or gangs.

Listen, I have done all these things and it didn't get me nowhere but prison.

For others, it leads to death.

Live your life to the best. Enjoy life and change before it's too late.

To The Beat Within

Well, I got a couple stamps left, and I could not resist but to write you guys and write a couple encouragements to the youth out there who don't know better until it's too late. I really thank you guys for your support and magazine that helps juveniles change and possibly not follow the destructive road I took my little trip on.

If there is anything in this world that is on my top list it would be to stop the young generation from making the mistakes I made. I just found out that I will be getting out August 20, 2008, so that is a blessing in itself.

Unfortunately I'm without funds and had to hustle up this stamp just so I could write you. I am not promising that I'm gonna write back again soon because of my being "indigent", so I'm just going to do my best this time.

The following is some encouragement for the youth and young generation in hopes that they listen and learn. Thank you for your support.

I really thank you guys for your support and magazine that helps juveniles change and possibly not follow the destructive road I took my little trip on.

RONNIE LEE MOODY

Readers

Dear young brothers and sisters and Beat readers,

Warm Kingdom greetings in Christ Jesus. My name is Brother Moody. I am a sinner saved by grace. I am writing to encourage you all that you are more than what you've become and God has a purpose and plan for your life (John 3:16) and the way to discover your purpose in life is to surrender your life to God by accepting Jesus Christ in your heart. That's the first step and the second is to read and study the Holy Bible, the manual of life instructions which will give you insight and understanding as to who you are and why God created you.

I shared my testimony in a previous Beat issue and for a long time I used to run from God. I got sick and tired of being sick and tired and enduring God's punishment and curses and the consequences of disobeying God and breaking the law, putting my own self in bad situations.

Ronnie Lee Moody addresses young brothers and sisters and other Beat readers from Corcoran State Prison with words of encouragement.

Now, today, I run to God instead of from Him because I want to experience living life on God's terms, living life more abundantly with prosperity, blessings, and success instead of curses and consequences, death. I am an over comer and a champion and my God and savior is a God of second chances (Matthew 11:28-30); read it and reflect on it. A wise person will take the death because Jesus offers a second chance. Jesus came so that we all may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10) and so that we may become over comers and champions.

Before I close I want to leave you all with this: You are more than what you've become.

Until next time, I'll holler, "God bless, stay prayed up and encouraged."

I extend my love and respect to you all.

Failed

I failed to contemplate the cost
I failed to see, although I tried
I rolled the dice and sadly lost,
I yearned to live, yet somehow died.
I tried to navigate my soul,
I sought and fought without a goal
I am no shepherd, but a sheep,
And so, O'Lord, my soul to keep!

*Gang banging was everything to me.
I thought the world was mine.*

Have You Been There?

Have you been there, done that?
Lived with your pockets fat?
Been to the top, conquered the world?
Swimming in gold and stories untold?
So what! At the end of that mirth
There is only six feet of earth!

Just Born

As the grace in the face of a newborn is seen,
So are the hearts that are pure, precious, and pristine.
Couldn't wait to grow up, now can't wait to return
To the way that I was after being just born.

Distant Love

I wonder what you're doing
Now that I'm so far away
I just hope that you're happy
And that some lover isn't trying to take my place
For to lose you would be the beginning of a hurt
A hurt that would have no end
Because not only would I lose my love
I'd also lose my very best friend
A smile to me is useless
If it doesn't come from your lovely face
And instead of calling this place prison
They should have named it "the lonely place"
There's no one that I can blame for my faults
And all of my troubles
But these are my distant thoughts
from your far away distant love
Dedicated to my baby girl, "La Panqila"
I love you, Preciosa...
Con todo mi corazon
I send to you across the miles
My tender love, my warm embrace
And my most passionate kiss
With the deepest respect and affection
I remain "Travieso."

The beautiful spirit and wisdom of our old friend Mikhail Markhasev has returned to the pages of The BWO. We are extremely honored, as mentioned in our editor's note last week to have Mikhail return with his knowledge and thoughts for us all to absorb. This week Mikhail delivers six poems! We anticipate plenty more from this seasoned writer and teacher, who has touched many of us over the years. Mikhail writes us from California State Prison Corcoran, in Corcoran, CA.

Never Thought

It's hard to say how I got here:
Was in my courage or my fear?
Am I plain stupid or sublime?
Or living on God's borrowed time?

I never thought that I'd get caught
I stole and murdered—and for what?
God wanted me to be a man,
To be a fool is what I sought...

Patience

Patience didn't possess, but wanted to rule
For the soul cared not, but had passion as fuel
Galloped through will the zeal of a careless fool,
Till experience showed I'm no horse but a mule!

Youth

Youth was full of zeal and brief
It faded like an autumn leaf
I thought I truly knew
Of life a thing or two...
But none of it was true.

TRAVIESO

We welcome to our pages Travieso, aka Douglas G., who writes to us from San Quentin State Prison, San Quentin, CA. We are thrilled to have Travieso on board, given his desire to not only write from the heart but his willingness to share some of his art too. What we know about Travieso, you will soon too. Read on and learn!

Dear Beat

I would like to extend my utmost saludos y respetos out to you. Gracias for sending me your magazine. I really enjoyed reading the wilas (writings) and poems the youngsters be sending. Few sadden me because all they talk about is going back to the same desmadre (mess). I can relate to that. Been there, done that.

Gang banging was everything to me. I thought the world was mine. You see I'm from South Central Los Angeles. It ain't easy to walk alone. I was a down ass homeboy, "Travieso," to the bone. But la vida loca took me farther than what I was willing to pay.

I'm 31 years old now. I'm sitting behind San Quentin State Prison walls, and life in here ain't no piece of cake. Where are the homies now? Nowhere to be found! Ain't no friends behind the fence. Only mi madrecita and my querida Panquila estan siempre conmigo (mother and my lovely Panquila who are always with me.)

I guess what I'm trying to say is, "Keep trucha, lil' homies!" Think twice about what you say and do. You play, you pay.

Con todo respeto,

Greetings!

Greetings, people. I want to place great emphasis on unity, which is our only fundamental source of strength and our philosophy of mental warfare against this system. See, we not only must unite but must educate our people with the knowledge of the continuous injustice against all people of color.

Even in 2008, we as humans have the tendency to hope for a better day rather than to work and run the risk for it. People, this is a particularly strong statement because when we push our confrontation upon those in authority, they know it endanger the safety of their racist system; this is why, in particular, all people of color should not launch a serious challenge or protest without the full knowledge and awareness of all the injustices committed against people of color. We must unite to permanently dismantle all aspects of this institutionalized racism and we must work daily to expunge all elements of it and stand up for the rights of all people of color and all the world oppressed. For us to sit by and do nothing and risk the loss of another generation of youth while this country's failure to set its house in order will destroy all people of color. We must take action now and stop America's prisons from ransoming people of color with a hope and a promise.

At the outset, allow me to make one thing clear; I care nothing less than nothing about the so-called founding fathers of this land; the American system thinks they will continue to treat me and my people, our ideas, with no regard, for they have and continue to persecute us in every way they can, either by slander and mob violence or denying us the right to be human and practice our birthright. I speak from behind the wall, merely to say to America, "All right, I don't like you, either." See, people, please take note that all people of color have been at the forefront of the struggle to end racism and white supremacy in the U.S. since individual

Anthony Baker, aka Fela A Sami a new Beat contributor from a correctional institution CMF in Vacaville, CA, was introduced to us by one of our regulars, Bobby M. Dixon. Give him a read! Welcome, Anthony!

free people of color immigrated here.

Even though much of our struggle has been directly concerned with the plight of people of color and all the gains received from civil rights work has had some positive impact on the social status of non-whites in this country, our struggle continues to this day. Our revolutionary liberation struggle today in the U.S. is greatly undermined by outmoded patriarchal emphasis on nationhood and white rule. The absence of a strategy for coalition building would mark out a place in America for people of color, but the lack of a strong and sustained program for education for critical consciousness that would engage all people of color in a process of radical politicization. Note the enemy is not white people but white America supremacy.

Today, still, it is hard to accept that racism is still a powerful dominating force in all our lives. I look back at all the people of color who sacrificed to challenge and change American supremacy. These people gave their lives to the cause of racial justice. Our hearts should be deeply saddened that still, to this day, we have not fulfilled their shared dream of ending racism.

So, to paraphrase from various freedom fighters like Brother MLK, imagine a beloved community where race would be transcended and forgotten, where no one would see skin color; this dream has not been realized to this very day. From its inception, this very thought was a flawed vision. The flaw, however, was not the imagining of a beloved community; it was the insistence that such a community could only exist if we completely erase and stop all racism. This can only be done by resistance to global western imperialism.

In Love

Te amo, mi amor, but you don't have to pretend you love me anymore.

It's deja vu; I think I've been through this before. I saw it comin'.

The pain you gave me left a lump inside my stomach long ago. I'll pack my bags and go; the rest belongs to you. I want for nothin'.

I never wanted the cryin', fightin', and fussin'.

It didn't work 'cause I was the only one lovin'.

It's hard to say goodbye, but...

Love is just a word you heard me say.

You'll understand when I take my love away.

That's if you care 'cause love is a feelin'.

Love isn't fair, love is pain when love isn't there.

You'll feel it later.

If you don't hear me now, you'll hear me later

When you find yourself alone at night.

When I'm alone I cry myself to sleep

So I don't sleep much.

I sit up and lust,

Think of your touch and all the things you told me.

Promises made but what you showed me were lies.

All for nothin'

I was so blind I wasted many days;

All that I gave you gave away

And you say you love me,

But love is just a word you heard me say.

You kept me lost with all the games you play.

The hours turn to days.

I'm a kid again lost inside your maze

I know my way out, but I really want to stay.

BRON'SHI JACKSON

Bronshi Jackson delivers another wonderful piece from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. This week he returns with some more poetic words about love. He also has something to say about how it feels to see his writing in The Beat. We know your words have touched many of our readers, Bronshi, keep the insight and knowledge coming!

The Beat

Off the top I want to send my love and respect to the whole staff. I pray all is well and goes on doin' well in the future. Just go my copy of The Beat this week and, just like last time, I was overjoyed to see my writin' inside this month's edition. Just pray that it touched one of the many readers you have and they can tack somethin' good out of what I wrote. Remember, I'm not just doin' this for me; I'm doin' this for y'all as well. I'm gonna keep writing y'all because, just like everyone else, I'm tryin' to get my copy of The Beat every week with my words of wisdom inside of it. So be lookin' out for me, K?

Before I get off this paper, I want to give a shout out to my boy Spanks who introduced me to The Beat in Sacramento County in 2004. I ain't forgot about you, homie! Man, I flew through The Beat lookin' for you in this edition. Where you at, homie? I'll be lookin' out for you.

Alright, then, I'm out, but before I go, here's somethin' I wrote called "In Love" for all of you who are like me and in love with someone who doesn't love you back. Enjoy and God bless.

*You may see but you're looking through
 demon's glasses...*

A Chance

From a KAGE

I crave redemption, I want back what you took from me.

That which you never gave me,
 the opportunity to get a chance.

You say I had a chance at righteous life

In the midst of drugs, broken homes,

Pimps, prostitutes, and gangsters

In a community built on strife...

A chance

I beg to differ.

From a caged land of broken

And battered souls, your prison system destroys

While your economy booms.

We're cattle...

A chance

Is what I take on my own

So I may strengthen myself in the mental,

Physical, and spiritual zone.

Fighting tooth and nail to get the wisdom

Back home.

Pye Face the FED Tyme sends greetings from High Desert State Prison in Susanville, CA. He tells of a program he has started to mentor the "youthful masses." We wish him success in his endeavors. We hope The Beat Within can be a resource for this good work. We'd love to know what all these acronyms mean, like FED, KAGE, UKB and ATG. Maybe in the next missive.

Say Ndugu!

I extend this missive with respects in hopes these honorable words reach you at your best. I have started a new mentoring-brotherhood enterprise entitled, "United KAGE Brothers Enterprise." My goal is to advocate, litigate, mentor and educate the youthful masses about the laws and how the system works in all. As part of my give-back pilot program we intend to start a U.K.B. arts and crafts class and study group. Our motto is, "A Change and A Chance." We aim to show society we will and can be a part of the world, instead of always against it!

Our movement from prison to the street is a "left for dead" movement, so we hope to move straight ahead with our proposals as follows: a.) We intend to propose UKB present Bobby Hemp for the Cure; with 50% of our funds raised from Bobby Hemp items will go for both cancer victims and medical marijuana activism, and b.) Our ATG.= 23 for peace; stop the violence, stop the hate cause. We are looking to network with others such as you selves.

*From a caged land of broken
 And battered souls, your pris-
 on system destroys
 While your economy booms.*

JESSIE MACWILLIAMS

Jessie MacWilliams from Selma, Alabama was introduced recently by Curtis Cook. He has contributed another poem for all of us to enjoy. Keep 'em comin', Jessie!

VIRGIL TURNER JR.

Here's a short, quick poem written by Virgil Turner Jr. from a correctional facility in Selma, Alabama. The topic is on love and everything related to love.

Love

Love is a four letter word

Love is real

Love sometimes does you bad

Love feels good; it feels like a Sunday on the beach

Love hurts

Love is strong

Love is sacrifice

Love is forgiving

Love is kind

Love is romantic

Love is eternal

Love is enduring

Love is peaceful

Love is for me and you

Repent and Hear and See For The First Time

Eternal damnation brings the strongest man fear

I cry out for Jesus; He speaks, I cover my ears

It's not that I don't want to hear His words;

I wonder do I deserve His words.

I follow my sinful flesh time after time

I was graced with eyes and still I'm blind.

For closed ears that heard them with sight is blind and

made a confused reaction

You may see but you're looking through demon's
 glasses

Don't be ashamed to reveal yourself to God; just feel
 guilty of what you do

Although you're in a different part of the ocean, we're all
 in the same boat

I wrote this, Lord, 'cause I feel you're disappointed when
 you see me

But the little I listen I heard you'll never leave me

And that can be done only by the love of God

In It For Life

A lot of us think that we are "in it for life," that the world will never hold anything for us but crime. There are a number of ways that life can get you to this point. Some of us are born genetically leaning toward this future (real life natural born criminals), and these people have added challenges. Crime is not always about a choice to do wrong, believe it or not. For those growing up in poverty, around gangs and abusive or absent parents, crime may seem like the natural and only choice.

The good news is that they lied to you; your life can be more than just another casualty of the block. Sometimes it takes a trip to prison to realize this. You realize that a person cannot possibly live by smoking weed and doing coke, not caring about work or wanting something better, and having friends or family drag you down. You need to break away from everything that won't help you be a happy, independent adult. Lay down your thoughts of vengeance for those who wronged you. Those thoughts will destroy you even if you don't get to the person. Let the police do their job and don't be their victim, either.

Forget those fake friends who were there for the drug and while the fun lasted. This should show you that you can not have true friends (the kind who care about you) while you do drugs. The two are incompatible with each other. How many of your past friends wrote? Tried to get you a lesser sentence?

The help is out there if you want it. If you've got psychological problems to where you feel like you just have to be a criminal, there's free counseling and medication in prison and from your county health center. It made a difference for me. If your home life is so messed up, you can go to a halfway house until you get on your feet. Social security will probably be able to help with money or vocational training if you qualify for it.

Pay attention to your options when you leave prison. Plan ahead and you will break the cycle of misery in your life.

Steven Baer, from Apalachee Correctional Institution in Florida, contributes more of his writing and views to The Beat and our readers. He's got some powerful words and a very interesting outlook on "natural born criminals" who have a genetic propensity toward a life of crime. Is it genetics or environmental? That's something that would make an interesting study, Steven!

Karma vs. Payback

There is one question that reigns

In every convict's mind

And that is karma vs. payback

Karma is accepting the truth of your life

Payback is anger turning day into night

Karma is making your peace with the judge

Payback is still holding a grudge

Karma is letting their acts come around

Payback is putting them off in the ground

Karma is relief and a load off your chest

Payback is two guns and a bulletproof vest

Karma is working the political process

Payback is a bomb strapped under your vest

Karma saves lives, karma gives hope

Payback is freedom, then peddlin' dope

Karma makes loved ones' hearts well up with pride

Payback makes your family want to run far and hide

Karma is freedom and the dreams you once chose

Payback is the poison you put up your nose

Karma is joy looking back at the end

Payback is choices you cannot defend

The game has been given

You have all the tools

Turning Point

As I lay here and think on the past, dude

Ain't gettin' out of this place any time soon

Walked a straight line until I ran out of means

And one by one the world snuffed out my dreams

Fell from slightly left short of perfect

To a certifiable reject

Please look away

I feel so ashamed

Yet I'm the one to blame

Like strike from clockers I was on the fence

Till I took that barb down

Now I'm shackled with Buddha Hat time

Gotta redefine

Who the hell I'm supposed to be

Cause this here just ain't doin' it for me

It's either struggle or to rise in a race to the top

Or sleepin' real heavy, dirt piled on top

For my freedom I will

Push it to the limit

To keep it

Never seen a jail cell before you can keep it

My anger flows through like a portal

Jeopardizing mere mortals

I sift through the wretched

Rubble of life

Alone and searching

Till I find the meaning of life.



*Power and popularity was my only goal
And in my past to remember me by
Are the people I hurt and how they died
A tale to be scorned for my ignorant deeds
A child imprisoned away from society
Human I am and can only be
Who practiced his sin and paid his fee,
There is only one shot at existence on earth
Don't ever take it with ease
Work for the reason of your birth
For sin cannot set you free*

read the rest of Jeremy Towner's BWO piece on page 60

